ABSTRACT

PRACTICING PRAYER AND ATTACHMENT TO GOD:

A STUDY OF EMERGING ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION

by

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This research studies the impact of a prayer intervention with emerging adults designed to counter the self-centered nature of moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD) through the practice of praise and intercession. The theology of prayer was reviewed, concluding that the primary purpose of prayer is to connect with God. Emerging adulthood was reviewed with consideration for how to approach spiritual formation and discipleship. Attachment to God theory was determined to be a meaningful measure of spiritual formation.

A four-week prayer intervention using experiential and cooperative learning theory to implement the practice of prayer modeling the Great Commandment was developed and implemented at Indiana Wesleyan University. Praise (loving God) and intercession (loving others) were practiced; intentionally forcing participants to divert attention from self, the default focus of MTD. Of 65 participants, 27 completed pre- and post-intervention surveys measuring attachment to God on a Likert scale.

Survey results indicate that participation in the intervention positively correlated with a more secure attachment to God at significant levels. One-tailed t-tests demonstrate a significant change in the responses to six of the nine questions (five of these where $p<.01$). Post intervention surveys show 24 of 27 respondents indicated their relationship

with God was “better” or “significantly better” after participating in the intervention. Additional qualitative data indicates that guided practice with community support was one of the greatest strengths of the intervention.

PRACTICING PRAYER AND ATTACHMENT TO GOD:

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter 1 provides an overview of this ministry project and the researcher's personal connection to it. This project accomplishes five primary functions: (1) it establishes God's purpose for prayer; (2) it defines the problem of moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD) within the lives of emerging adults; (3) it identifies praise and intercession as a means to address the problems of MTD; (4) it identifies attachment theory as a means of studying spiritual formation; and (5) it develops and evaluates a 4-week intervention focused on prayer using experiential learning theory. The purpose of the project was to design an intervention, and determine whether it was effective in creating a *secure* attachment bond to God in Christian emerging adults. This is important because many emerging adults who identify themselves as Christians hold a set of beliefs about God (MTD) that promotes an *avoidant* attachment bond. To address this problem, the intervention had participants look outside of themselves and engage in the Great Commandment to love God and others through praise and intercession.

This chapter previews and establishes a framework of understanding for the reader. First, an autobiographical section identifies how this research is relevant to the researcher's own life and context. Next, the researcher presents the problem statement, followed by sections on the purpose and rationale of the project. Key definitions are provided to avoid semantic misunderstandings along with a section outlining the scope of the literature review. Delimitations are addressed and a brief summary regarding research methodology concludes the chapter.

Personal Introduction

Over the course of twenty years in ministry with youth and college students, I have needed to not only change my methods, but my message as well. I began as an evangelical young man eager to make a difference. I made sure I knew how to defend the faith and explain salvation clearly. However, I began to realize after working with teens in the late 1990s, that this was no longer my critical task (or at least not at first). Most of the young people I encountered did not doubt the existence of God, but rather his relevance. They knew about him, but relatively few "knew" him. As I shared my concerns with area youth pastors, I learned that I was not alone. In fact, we were encountering what would later be defined as *moralistic therapeutic deism*—a false faith that does not wrestle with challenging doctrine or a challenging God, but replaces these with a self-soothing set of beliefs about God created to serve one's own needs. What remains is an agreeable, but impotent faith.

In 2008, I stepped away from vocational ministry to pursue a career in public education and spend summers with my wife, mentoring emerging adult summer staff at a Christian camp. Over the course of nearly a decade, we walked with these beautiful young people for a summer at a time, watching them grow. Many of them came from Christian homes and churches and had attended camp previously as campers. Others were first generation Christians. Nearly all of them would have honestly told us that they love the Lord. Unfortunately, over time we learned that their professed love for the Lord at camp did not always coincide with their daily lives at home. Rather than a faith journey marked by radical obedience to the Lord Almighty, many of these young adults

seemingly had opted for a more convenient relationship with Jesus. We knew that most of them had been exposed to good teaching, but something was missing. As I reflected upon my experiences, I realized that while these emerging adults were typically more biblically literate than the teens I had worked with as a youth pastor, at least some of them shared this watered-down perspective toward faith. So if biblical teaching was not the missing ingredient, what was?

The emerging adults who seemed to struggle outside of the close Christian fellowship at camp were not intimate and secure in their relationship with the Almighty in their daily lives. Some were anxiously trying to follow the rules of an impersonal God while others were in rebellion, avoiding God and his rules. Many believed in a very personal God, but did not give him authority in their lives. Rather than drawing close and being transformed themselves by the God of Abraham, they preferred to transform God into something less demanding. These emerging adults typically called upon God when in need, but they had buffered their daily lives from the demands of a relationship with our intensely loving Father and sovereign King.

In consideration of how to structure our formal ministry time at camp, I reflected on what had been spiritually formational in my own life and in my experience discipling Christian youth. Three themes emerged; listening to the Holy Spirit, interceding in prayer, and studying the Word of God. Learning to listen to the Holy Spirit was critical to me early on as a young man in ministry with my own personal struggles. I found help and healing with the assistance of a Christian counselor that taught (and sometimes forced!) me to ask God questions and listen to him for answers. I learned the power of praying for others while leading a mission trip with our youth group. The organization hosting us

trained us to go into the city and pray for people on the streets (something I had not done before). This practice forced me to rely on God and helped me to gain a broader Kingdom perspective about faith as I experienced God's hand at work through me. Finally, the Word of God has been instrumental to my spiritual formation. Knowing what God's Word says in its entirety, along with the memorization of specific passages, guides and inspires me as I listen and pray. With these principles in mind, I was able to create a format for our meeting times with the emerging adult leaders at camp.

Our formal time of ministry at camp was in small group settings. As expected, many things changed about the structure of these meetings over time, but three constants remained: reading the Word, seeking and listening for God, and praying for others. The purpose of this was to invite an encounter with God by looking outside of self. At each small group meeting, individuals shared how they witnessed God's Word interacting with God's Kingdom the previous week. Afterward, someone would pray aloud for the one who shared, specifically seeking God's heart and will for them. I was surprised by how many of these young adults were not accustomed to seeking God in their prayers, or praying out loud for other people. However, watching the Lord move in their hearts week after week while they interceded for others convinced me that this practice was filling a necessary gap in their faith journey.

During our years of ministry with emerging adults together at camp, my wife and I discerned that God was calling us into a more permanent ministry with emerging adults. In preparation for this, I began my doctoral studies in 2016 with the intention of researching principles and practices that might be applied with emerging adults across the continent. This project has been designed to explore how the practice of regular prayer

that is focused not on self, but on God and others, impacts the relationship that proclaimed Christian emerging adults have with God.

Statement of the Problem

Many emerging adults identify themselves as Christians, but seem to lack a transformative relationship with God. Instead of radical obedience to and intimacy with the Almighty God, they have settled for the convenience of a god of their own creation who is neither personal nor powerful. Regardless of age, failing to embrace the transcendent and immanent nature of God is an obstacle to having a transformative relationship with him.

Emerging adulthood is a time when personal identity apart from family is being formed and personal freedom is highly valued (Smith and Snell 70, 150; Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development" 473–74). This combination makes it difficult for emerging adults to embrace beliefs held by their parents that limit freedoms or place demands upon them. Living in a consumer-driven society only compounds the problem with its emphasis on satisfying self and meeting personal needs. Some emerging adults do seek intimate experiences with God, but do not desire to live under his authority. They prefer to determine who God is by molding him to fit their chosen lifestyle. These emerging adults believe they are embracing the Christian faith, but instead have created (or in some cases have been handed down) a set of beliefs about God that is not consistent with orthodox Christian beliefs. Other emerging adults maintain orthodox Christian beliefs held in their childhood but compartmentalize faith, not allowing it to impact their daily living.

God is not a problem for most emerging adults, as long as God can be kept at a distance and only called upon when needed. Christian Smith first used the term *moralistic therapeutic deism* (MTD) to describe the faith of many teens after conducting his research in the National Study of Youth and Religion (Smith and Denton 162). It is not a separate religion, but a set of beliefs about faith. Future phases in this longitudinal study would determine that MTD is embraced by emerging adults as well (Smith and Snell, chap.7). These beliefs place God in the impersonal and relatively powerless role of a "cosmic butler" or "divine therapist" that does not become too personally involved (Smith and Denton 165). This perception of God fails to recognize his universally sovereign (transcendent) and personally intimate (immanent) nature. I propose that one problem with understanding God in this way is that it results in a relationship with him that is less secure and more likely to be characterized as avoidant or anxious.

Purpose of the Project

Research Questions

The purpose of the research was to develop and evaluate the impact of a 4-week prayer intervention for students at Indiana Wesleyan University that focused on looking outside of one's self and connecting with the transcendent and immanent God of the Bible through the practice of regular prayer.

Research Question #1

How avoidant/anxious/secure is the style of attachment to God of students at Indiana Wesleyan University prior to the 4-week prayer intervention?

Research Question #2

How avoidant/anxious/secure is the style of attachment to God of students at Indiana Wesleyan University following the 4-week prayer intervention?

Research Question #3

What were the strengths and weaknesses of this intervention as perceived by the participants?

Rationale for the Project

College students are in a critical, and inherently unstable, life stage recently labeled "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development" 471). This life stage has been created by the delay of taking on the typical responsibilities of adulthood, such as marriage, family, and a long-term career, until later in life. While previous generations often took on these adult responsibilities in their early twenties, this generation has extended the window between adolescence and adulthood (Brooks). Emerging adulthood is a time when young adults are still finding their way into a secure and settled adult life while trying to simultaneously navigate multiple life transitions (Smith and Snell 34). Therefore, it is imperative to provide tools for ministries concerned with the spiritual formation of emerging adults that connect them to the living God who can guide them in Truth and Love through this inherently unstable stage of life.

Most emerging adults embrace some form of moralistic therapeutic deism rather than the traditional orthodox Christian faith of previous generations (Smith and Snell 155). This default belief system is particularly destructive because it detaches God from daily life and places the individual at the center of one's faith journey. In fact, one of its

defining characteristics is that "the central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself." Previously acknowledged authorities, such as Scripture or a faith community, are cast aside in favor of experience and personal judgment. MTD also keeps God at a distance relationally, only calling upon him in times of trouble (Smith and Snell 156). This leaves emerging adults with a god that ultimately disappoints, because he was never more than a god of their own creation.

This intervention was designed to break down deeply ingrained beliefs inherent in MTD by having participants engage in praise and intercession to a God who is both personal and powerful. It does not attempt to refute MTD simply by teaching good theology. Instead it explores how effectively prayer, specifically prayers of praise and intercession, transforms the pray-er. This requires some teaching about prayer and the character of God. However, the focus of this intervention is on practice as opposed to knowledge.

Definition of Key Terms

Prayer: Prayer is defined in this project as any communication between the living God found in the Bible and a person (the "pray-er"). It requires being in his presence and may include speaking, listening, or both. The primary purpose for all prayer is connecting with God. In prayer, God communicates with creation about himself (Burge 64).

Praise: Praise is a type of prayer that focuses on the goodness of God. While prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of praise have some different features, they both perform the

function of exalting God. Therefore, this project includes prayers of thanksgiving within the general terminology of "praise" unless specifically noted.

Intercession: Intercession is a type of prayer that petitions God on behalf of another. These prayers can be for individuals, groups, or all of creation. True intercession is selfless and seeks to accomplish God's will (Seok 2, 84). Derived from Latin roots, intercession means "a going between" (*Intercession | Origin and Meaning of Intercession by Online Etymology Dictionary*), requiring effective intercessors to be connected to Christ and to the world.

Attachment Theory: Attachment theory was originally conceived pertaining to how infants relationally connect, or "attach," to their mothers. This psychological theory was first introduced to the public by John Bowlby in 1958 and researched extensively by Mary Ainsworth, most notably in what is known as the Strange Situation (Bretherton 9, 17). This research studied how infants responded in new environments with and without their mothers present. Observations led researchers to classify attachment relationships between infants and mothers into three primary types; secure, avoidant, and anxious (Moriarty, Hoffman, and Grimes 45–46). For research purposes, these categories have subsequently been applied to attachment relationships between adults as well as in an individual's attachment to God. Attachment to God is what this project addresses.

Emerging Adulthood: Emerging adulthood is a life-stage referring to adults 18-29 years old who have yet to take on the responsibilities often associated with adulthood. The

average number of years between a young person leaving home and taking on adult responsibilities has grown consistently over the past thirty years, leading to this new classification. These years cannot be defined as an extended adolescence, because of the independence typically associated with being 18. However, individuals in this stage of life cannot be accurately described as young adults either, considering they have yet to take on any established adult responsibilities, such as marriage, family, or a career (Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood : The Winding Road From the Late Teens Through the Twenties* 4).

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: Moralistic therapeutic deism is a set of beliefs held by many emerging adults, first identified in teens through The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) in 2002 (Smith and Denton 162). These beliefs focus on the importance of being a good person and the therapeutic value of believing in the existence of God. Hundreds of interviews with teens were synthesized and codified into the following five statements inherent to moralistic therapeutic deism:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

(Smith and Denton 162-4). The NSYR interviewed this same group five years later as 18-23 year olds, and discovered they continued to hold similar beliefs (Smith and Snell, chap.7).

"he/his/him": No words can accurately describe God and pronouns are particularly troublesome. While God is portrayed biblically in predominately masculine terms, placing one gender on God is not necessarily beneficial. Capitalizing pronouns for God likens them to proper nouns, which uniquely identify a noun. By keeping pronouns uncapitalized, the intention is to diminish the issue of gender when referencing God. This said, I ask for your grace and understanding as you continue reading.

Delimitations

Participants

Participants in this intervention included college students attending Indiana Wesleyan University. This group consisted of residence hall chaplains and students they invited to participate with them. This group was selected because of my personal calling to minister to emerging adults and a connection I have to the chaplain ministry at Indiana Wesleyan University.

The intervention consisted of two components. The first component was a weekly gathering for encouragement, reflection, learning, and practice of prayer together. Second, participants were expected to pray throughout the week and come back to report on their experiences in small groups.

The intervention specifically did not include other elements that might impact the study, such as inspirational messages and emotional worship events. While these variables may enhance the effectiveness of the intervention, the purpose of this project was to research an intervention with variables that were more easily replicated in multiple settings. With this in mind, these variables may have influenced participants in other settings while participating in this intervention.

Review of Relevant Literature

Prayer— A Biblical Foundation

A biblical foundation establishing prayer as critical to maintaining a relationship with God was the first task of this literature review. This process required the review of a broad cross-section of Scripture as opposed to detailed analysis of a particular text. Mack B. Stokes was an excellent resource in his writing on prayer that draws from the Psalmists, Jeremiah, Jesus, and Paul (Stokes, *Talking with God* 29–58; Stokes, *Person-to-Person*, chaps.3–6). Once this broader work was done, two specific types of prayer found in Scripture were reviewed. The importance of praise including seven Hebraic words for "praise" was reviewed, inspired by the book *The Presence Based Church* (Teykl and Ponder 173–77). Special attention was also paid to Paul's teaching and examples of intercessory prayer in his letters. Multiple authors echoed the similar theme that intercessory prayer was not only important to Paul, but is a fundamental part of walking with Christ (Stokes, *Person-to-Person*; Foster; Goldsworthy). This biblical literature review establishes a foundation that the primary purpose for prayer is to establish and maintain a connection with God.

Prayer— A Theological Foundation

A theological foundation for prayer was then established connecting theology with prayer and reviewing literature that considered positions held by theologians throughout history on the nature of God. Regardless of the variety of positions, most theologians reviewed emphasized that prayer and theology cannot be separated (Casiday 38; LeFevre 188; Clements 7; Young 193). Two theological themes relating to prayer and God's nature were reviewed, the first of which was the transcendent and immanent nature of God. This led to the question of how God is able to respond to prayer while maintaining his immutable (unchanging) nature. Regarding transcendence and prayer, Chris S. Gombos provided in-depth analysis of desert father St. Evagrius; Peter Beck did likewise regarding the theology of Jonathan Edwards (Gombos). The immanence of God was explored by reviewing 20th century theologians. The second theme focused on how petitionary prayer relates to the divine providence of God. This theme emerged through reviewing the work of Dennis L. Okholm. His dissertation provided a summary of the progression of thought by theologians wrestling with the topic of how (or even if) God is influenced by petitionary prayer. Okholm placed a particular emphasis on theologians Karl Barth and Norman Pittenger.

Emerging Adulthood

Reviewing literature on the life stage of emerging adulthood was necessary to design an appropriate intervention for campus ministries. This research relied upon the work of Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, who first identified this life stage in 2004. Resources

building upon Arnett's work published after 2010 were also consulted to provide the most current perspectives regarding emerging adulthood Christian Smith and Patricia Snell's work, based on the longitudinal studies of the National Study on Youth and Religion, was the primary resource reviewed to provide greater depth of understanding to the morality and values of emerging adults. A review of emerging adulthood would not be complete without considering the consumer-driven church and society in which today's emerging adults grew up in. The separate writings of Skye Jethani and Kenda Creasy Dean provided insight in this area.

The review of emerging adulthood concluded with a definition and review of moralistic therapeutic deism as the predominant set of faith beliefs among emerging adults. Most of the literature reviewed was connected to The National Study of Youth and Religion, and the subsequent published works of Christian Smith, Melina Lundquist Denton, and Patricia Snell. Due to its specific focus on emerging adults, particular attention was paid to Smith and Snell's work.

Prayer as an Intervention for Spiritual Formation

Reviewing the value of considering prayer as an actual intervention was a two-step process. The first step identified what is needed in the spiritual formation of emerging adults, specifically addressing the concerns of moralistic therapeutic deism. David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling's work served as the primary source reviewed for this purpose *d* (chaps.1–2). The second step identified how connecting to the transcendence and immanence of God through prayer might meet those needs. A broad sampling of work was reviewed to demonstrate how prayer of this nature meets the

criteria (established by Setran and Keisling) for moving emerging adults beyond MTD. Individual works by Kenneth Leech and by Richard Foster were included in this review along with more recent works by practicians of the faith researching the impact of intercession in the field (Helvey; Barber; Seok). All of these works confirmed the transforming nature of unselfish intercessory prayer, emphasizing God's transcendent and immanent nature.

Prayer and Attachment Theory

Prayer research identifying different types of prayer and their relationship to general well-being of the pray-er were the primary sources reviewed. Aside from one large study led by Margaret M. Poloma and George H. Gallup, the research discovered was scant and its findings were inconsistent with the hypothesis of this project. However, the types of prayer being studied in this intervention (praise and intercession) did not neatly fit in the types of prayer studied in most previous research. Findings in previous prayer research may also indicate different results because "successful" prayer was previously measured on the *General Scale of Well Being*. The research tool used in this project did not measure general well-being, but attachment to God.

Attachment theory was used as a means of measurement for this study because it more closely measures the determined purpose of prayer, which is connection to God. Attachment to God was also chosen as a unit of measure of spiritual formation with the understanding that it is a relationship with God that forms and transforms. The work of Lee A. Kirkpatrick was reviewed to provide a foundation for understanding the central

aspects of attachment relationships, and determining that attachment theory is applicable to the relationship a person has with God as an attachment figure.

Research Methodology

Type of Research

This project was designed to be intervention research. To evaluate the impact of this intervention, I used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data was collected with a research based pre- and post-intervention survey. This instrument, entitled *Attachment to God Scale*, assessed participants' style of attachment to God prior to the intervention, while the post-test assessed the same thing following the intervention. Qualitative data was collected by including an open-ended question, at the end of the second survey, asking participants to reflect upon their experience. To probe more deeply into these reflections, focus groups were interviewed.

The intervention itself was a 4-week study on prayer, intentionally designed to take the focus of spirituality off of self and personal needs. Instead, prayer was focused on God's nature and will, particularly as it pertains to others and the Kingdom. Each week was dedicated to practicing a specific aspect of praise or intercession. Participants met weekly as one group, but divided into small groups for discussion and prayer. They also prayed daily as individuals. The format for each weekly meeting was the same (see below);

1. reflect on their prayer experience from the previous week and encourage one another in their efforts (small group),
2. receive teaching about prayer and God's character (whole group), and
3. pray together incorporating weekly teaching (small group)

Participants

Participants consisted of Indiana Wesleyan University students from 18-29 years of age. Residence hall chaplains at Indiana Wesleyan University were given an overview of the intervention and trained in how to collect and care for research data needed. They were also asked to invite students in their residence halls between ages of 18-29 to participate in the intervention and research. Student body chaplains were asked to invite off-campus students of the same age to participate.

Data Collection

Data was collected from participants to determine the impact of this intervention on their attachment to God, the specific strengths and weaknesses of the intervention, and its generalizability as a tool to use in ministry with Christian emerging adults. Below are the instruments used in this evaluation:

Pre-intervention Attachment to God Survey (PS1): A research-based survey given prior to the intervention that assesses attachment style to God (completed by participants).

Post-intervention Attachment to God Survey (PS2): A research-based survey given following the intervention that assesses attachment style to God (completed by participants).

Intervention Questionnaire: A short questionnaire given following the intervention including a section identifying the respondents' degree of participation followed by a question asking respondents to identify perceived strengths and weaknesses of the intervention.

Focus Groups: Two focus groups of 4-8 participants were assembled following the intervention to gather additional data on strengths and weaknesses of the intervention.

Table 1.1. Data Collection Instruments

Research Question	Corresponding Data Collection Instruments
RQ1: How avoidant/anxious/secure is the style of attachment to God of students at Indiana Wesleyan University prior to the 4-week prayer intervention?	*Pre-Attachment to God Survey*
RQ2: How avoidant/anxious/secure is the style of attachment to God of students at Indiana Wesleyan University following the 4-week prayer intervention?	*Post-Attachment to God Survey*
RQ3: What are the strengths and weaknesses of this intervention?	*Intervention Questionnaire* *Focus Groups*

Outline of Timeline for Data Collection

December 2018/Jan 2019: Met with residence hall chaplains at Indiana Wesleyan University. They were given an overview of the intervention and trained in how to collect and care for research data needed. They were also asked to invite students in their residence halls, between ages of 18-29, to participate in the intervention and research. Student body chaplains were asked to invite off-campus students of the same age to participate.

January-February 2019: Students participated in five prayer intervention sessions over the course of four weeks. During the first session, students were given the pre-

intervention survey. During the final session, students were given the post-intervention survey. Focus groups were interviewed three weeks following the conclusion of the intervention.

Data Analysis

Several forms of data analysis were provided based upon the type and purpose of the measures in the study. For the quantitative instrumentation consisting of the Pre-Attachment to God Survey (PS1) and the Post-Attachment to God Survey (PS2), mean score comparisons were conducted on the Likert-scale items to determine the significance of any reduction in anxious or avoidant attachment to God. Additionally, subsets by gender and year of graduation were created to analyze and compare the impact of the intervention on these specific groups. Strengths and weaknesses of the intervention were analyzed through a qualitative textual analysis of the question regarding strengths and weaknesses in PS2. Quantitative and qualitative data regarding strengths and weaknesses of the intervention were also analyzed from focus group interviews. Quantitative data from a Likert-scale rating different components of the intervention was analyzed. Textual analysis of group discussion explored themes and patterns regarding the effectiveness of various components of the intervention.

Generalizability

The purpose of this study was to create a 4-week prayer intervention for Christian emerging adults that would specifically counteract the self-centered nature of moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD) in order to establish a more secure attachment to God, and

evaluate its effectiveness. A mixed design, of quantitative and qualitative measures, was used to determine the impact of this intervention on their attachment to God. The quantitative data provides comparison numerical data indicating that this intervention significantly reduced both anxious and avoidant type relationships with God, resulting in more secure relationships with God. The credibility of this data was tested through a textual analysis of responses given by participants at the completion of the intervention and through analysis of focus groups. This analysis indicates that learning the purpose of both praise and intercession along with the challenge of practicing it in a group were specific strengths of the intervention.

While some variables in this study are generalizable to most North American settings, one cannot account for all of them. MTD is not a regional concern in the Christian community. It is a prevalent belief system undermining the faith of young adults across North America. Also, the intervention does not require significant resources and would be feasible to implement in a wide range of socio-economic settings. However, the demographic make-up of this research sample was relatively small and homogeneous. The study participants were primarily Caucasian. They also were all enrolled at Indiana Wesleyan University; located in a small town in the heart of the Midwest, the university specifically serves and recruits members of the Wesleyan denomination. While students from different races, denominations, and regions identified attend this university, generalizing the impact of this intervention to all emerging adults would be difficult. This is particularly true regarding minority individuals and those from international and urban settings.

Overview of the Remainder of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature and research on prayer, emerging adulthood (including MTD), and attachment theory. It also briefly reviews experiential and cooperative learning theories, to support the methodology used in the intervention. Chapter 3 explains in detail the design of the study, its methodology, and data-collection process. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the research. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the study's major findings and their implications regarding how ministries should practice spiritual formation in the future.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter 2 reviews literature pertinent to prayer, emerging adulthood, and attachment theory to explain how other-centered prayer may impact the attachment Christian emerging adults have with God. The first two sections present a biblical and theological foundation of prayer. Third is a review of literature on emerging adulthood, including the consumer-driven society they live in. Within this section, MTD is identified as the predominant faith of emerging adulthood. This section also hypothesizes that countering MTD in the spiritual formation of emerging adults might be most effectively done by having them connect with the transcendence and immanence of God through other-centered prayer. Fourth, a section on attachment theory is reviewed and upheld as a meaningful approach to measuring relationship with God. The final section reviews foundational learning principles used to design the format of the intervention, as well the research methods employed.

Biblical Foundations of Prayer

Prayer is found throughout the Bible. According to Joe Carter, editor of the Gospel Coalition, the Bible has 650 prayers, Jesus prayed 25 different times while on earth, and Paul mentions prayer 41 times in his letters. Kings prayed, prophets prayed, and widows prayed. Individuals, as well as nations, prayed. Not only is there a plethora of examples of prayer, the Bible is filled with teachings about prayer. With all of these accounts of prayer and specific teachings about prayer in the Bible, one could be easily

become overwhelmed and confused about how to pray. Many prayers found in Scripture have been used to provide a template for personal prayer; including the "Our Father," the Magnificat, the Lord's high priestly prayer, and even the prayer of Jabez. While each of these prayers is biblical, the limitation to using them as templates for personal prayer is that each took place in a very specific time and place. Rather than providing an outline or framework based on one prayer, this review seeks to provide insight by more broadly reviewing Scripture to reveal God's purpose for prayer.

Understanding the purpose of prayer helps direct believers on how to approach God in prayer with the right heart. God's purpose for all prayer is that his children connect with him. Knowing this purpose provides a framework that brings clarity to difficult passages about prayer and provides connective tissue to passages throughout Scripture. In addition to helping with a right heart, knowing the purpose of prayer can help shape the content of prayers offered to the Lord.

Scripture shows that prayer that fulfills the purpose of connecting people to God is not self-centered. To fulfill the purpose of connecting with God, the content of prayers must be primarily focused on God. While many types of prayer can accomplish this end, this review will specifically consider how prayers of praise and thanksgiving as well as prayers of petition (particularly intercession) can draw pray-ers closer to God by focusing on him and his Kingdom.

Approaching God with the Right Heart

Righteous, *authentic*, and *faith-filled* are three descriptors of a heart that connects with God through prayer. Biblical evidence indicates that these traits connect us to God

and they are deeply connected with another common trait- humility. Humility is necessary to acknowledge that only God can make us *righteous*, one cannot be *authentic* while concerned about the opinion of others, and it takes a humble heart to place complete *faith* in the hands of God. These three traits of a heart that connects with God in prayer are further explored below, along with their connection to humility.

Righteous. To intimately connect with God the pray-er must have a righteous heart. We know that God hears the prayers of the righteous (Ps. 34:17, Prov. 15:29), and the prayers of righteous people are powerful (Jas. 5:16b). Likewise, Scripture teaches that, in some capacity, sin prevents the Lord from hearing one's prayers. It is a barrier that hides God's face from the petitioner (Ps. 66:18, Isa. 59:2). It is an obstacle that prevents connection; therefore something must be done about sin. Only One has lived in this world without sin (1 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15, 1 Pet. 1:19). Fortunately, that One has the power to remove all sin (Ps. 12:5, John 1:29, Rom. 3:23-25, 1 John 1:7-9). Because humans are unable to live a sinless life, righteous prayer is not something that can be accomplished with pride, but is something that requires receiving with humility.

To be righteous before God requires humility. The Bible teaches that God lifts up the humble and despises the proud (Prov. 3:34, Jas. 4:6,10). He told the children of Israel that they must humble themselves before he will hear them, forgive them, and heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14). From this posture of humility, God's people are made righteous and lifted into an intimate relationship with him. This is an intimacy that a person cannot earn by living a sinless life, but only by confessing one's sinfulness and being cleansed (Eph.

2:8, 1 John 1:9). In addition, when sins are confessed the confessor must not be double-minded nor cherish iniquity in one's heart (Ps. 66:18).

Authentic. Prayer must be authentic for connection to occur. This may seem obvious, but Scripture provides evidence that it is not. Jesus addresses authenticity in two ways when teaching the disciples about prayer (Matt. 6:5-8). First, he tells them not to be like the hypocrites who make a public show about their prayer, but, rather, he tells them to pray in secret instead (v5-6). Jesus is not condemning public prayer; in fact, he specifically teaches at other times that he will be present when two or three are gathered to pray in his name (Matt. 18:20). His point is that when one prays, God should be the audience, not people (Rom. 2:29, Gal. 1:10).

The second way Jesus teaches his disciples to be authentic is by telling them not to babble, or "heap up empty phrases" (Matt. 6:7). Neither the number of their words nor the impressiveness of their vocabulary will create intimacy with the Father. He goes on to tell them that the Father already knows what they need (Matt. 6:8). So why ask? Because asking an authentic question rather than reciting a fancy prayer, is what builds relationship with him.

Faith-filled. Faith is a consistent theme in the Bible regarding prayer. James wrote, "When you ask, you must believe and not doubt" (Jas. 1:6). Matthew and Mark both record Jesus saying to the disciples that whatever they ask for in prayer they will receive if they have faith/ belief (Matt. 21:22, Mark 11:24). While these teachings may be the most direct, other teachings about prayer relate to faith as well. Jesus told a story to his

disciples, about a widow and judge, that demonstrated her complete dependence on the judge's mercy, and her belief that he could make things right (Luke 18:1-8). David prayed to the Lord to plead his case each morning and then watched (Ps. 5:3), clearly indicating that he believed that the Lord would do something. The early church is instructed to approach the throne of God with confidence (Heb. 4:16), and to pray faithfully and continually (Rom. 12:12, 1 Thess. 5:16). Jeremiah writes that when God's people seek God with their whole heart, they will find him (Jer. 29:13). Genuine belief is required to be confident, faithful, and continual in prayer. The Bible indicates that faith/ belief is vital to prayer.

James explains why belief is so important. He writes that the one who doubts is double-minded, and thus unstable like a wave in the sea being tossed by the wind (Jas. 1:6-8). This is why faith-filled prayer connects the pray-er powerfully with God. Such belief requires the person praying to invest completely in the object of that belief (God).

As with righteousness and authenticity, faith-filled prayer also requires humility. The pray-ers must let go of the mindset that they know what is best and trust the Lord. Once this is established, faith and trust are soon accompanied by confidence, expectation, and even joyful dependence. Likewise, praying in this manner reinforces belief in a God that lovingly responds to prayer.

Two Types of Prayer

This review explored how praise and petition— particularly intercession— connect believers with God. When considering the biblical accounts of how these types of prayer were practiced, both of these connect the pray-er with God by drawing the

focus away from self and toward the nature of God and joining him in his Kingdom work. Notably absent from this review is the prayer of confession. Confession clearly plays an important role in a believer's connection with God. However, it was not reviewed because of its greater focus on self.

Praise (and Thanksgiving). The Psalms are filled with praises that glorify God by simply celebrating who he is (Ps. 8:1, 29:1-2, 48:1a, 66:1). Believers are not only to praise God for who he is, they are to thank him for what he has done (Ps. 100:4, Phil. 4:6). They do this because prayer is not just about the blessing to be received, but about building a relationship by blessing God as well (Ps. 34:1). Praise and thanksgiving are a pleasing incense before the Lord (Ps. 141:2, Rev. 5:8).

Praise and thanksgiving have technical differences, but they both celebrate God. Praise is directed purely at the glory of the Lord and on acknowledging his character. Praise is the worship of God simply because he is worthy of it (Ps. 103:1, Rev. 5:11-12). This type of prayer is perhaps even less self-centered than prayers of thanksgiving which express gratitude often for things God has done for the pray-er (Hallesby 141). Praise was such an integral part of Hebrew prayer that Hebrew has seven different words for praise. Each of these has the capacity to create a deeper intimacy with our Creator.

YADAH (to worship with extended hand, to throw, to confess): YADAH is often used while declaring God's great mercy that endures forever (1 Chron. 16:34,41; 2 Chron. 20:21; Ez. 3:11). However, it also carries a broader message of total dependence upon God for more than just his mercy (Teykl and Ponder 175). We hear this acknowledgment of dependence from David as he calls out, "The LORD is my strength

and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him" (Ps. 28:7). Acknowledging God's mercy and our dependence upon him draws us close, as we desperately cling to the one who sustains us with mercy and goodness.

TOWDAH (extension of the hand in adoration or acceptance, sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving offering): TOWDAH communicates thanksgiving to God not only for what has been received, but also in acceptance of what will be given. Praising God for whatever he provides is an act of faith as well of one of adoration (Teykl and Ponder 175). It can even feel painful at times like a sacrifice to praise God in the midst of trial, but this is the meaning of TOWDAH. God's people are to offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call upon the name of the LORD (Ps. 116:17). By doing so they demonstrate their trust in him making their attachment to him less dependent on circumstances.

HALAL (to be clear, to shine, to boast, to show, to celebrate, to be foolish): David, who was a man after God's own heart, was so joyful when the ark returned to Jerusalem that he ran into the street and danced in his underwear (2 Sam. 6:1-23)! He was willing to be foolish and enjoyed being with God with no reservations. HALAL would be a good word to describe David's celebration. It is a type of praise that eliminates the barriers that might exist when one is concerned with cultural norms. "Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD" (1 Chron. 16:10).

SHABACH (to commend, to soothe): Various forms of SHABACH are only found in the Old Testament 11 times, and seem to be used quite differently at times. Psalms 145 is a psalm of praise using SHABACH, commending God for his greatness,

declaring, “One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts” (v4). While these praises include the might of his “terrible acts” (v. 6), the psalmist continues by praising God for his mercy and compassion (v. 8). Perhaps more enlightening is the use of SHABACH in Psalms 65, describing God’s strength as one which “stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people” (v. 7). These and similar passages demonstrate SHABACH as a way to praise God by commending him. His people publicly honor him and declare his mighty power to still the storm in their lives. Praising God in this way deepens a pray-er’s connection with him because it is a reminder that he has the power to set things right, and he can be depended on as a source of peace and stability.

BARAK (to bless, to kneel): BARAK is found in the Old Testament 330 times. Over 300 hundred of these refer to the act of blessing. While Scripture clearly demonstrates through the use of this word that God’s people receive blessings from God, BARAK is also used in reference to God receiving blessings from his people. Psalms is filled with BARAK. “I will bless the Lord at all times” and “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” are two examples of this (Ps. 34:1a, 103:1). The idea that people can bless God may seem overwhelming. How does creation bless Creator? How does the servant bless the Master? Looking at how BARAK is used other than in reference to “blessing” provides some insight to this question. Occasionally Scripture uses the term BARAK to depict kneeling (Gen. 24:11; 2 Chron. 6:13; Ps. 95:6). God may not need anything from his people, but God is blessed when his people are humble enough to acknowledge and adore him. Expressing love in a relationship through submission is powerful. BARAK is a symbiotic blessing, creating a bond as God’s people have this opportunity to bless and be blessed.

ZAMAR and TEHILLAH are both words that describe musical praise to God. ZAMAR is literally translated "to touch the strings," while TEHILLAH is translated "to sing, to laud." While the literal translation of ZAMAR seems to restrict its use to the playing of instruments, it is often used in the context of singing as well, making the terms difficult to distinguish. An example of this is found in Psalms 149:3, "Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises (ZAMAR) unto him with the timbrel and harp." While the nuances of these two words may be almost indistinguishable to the most adept modern-day scholars, no dispute can be made that the Hebrew people connected with God by calling out praises to God through music- a practice that speaks to the hearts of Christians around the world to this day.

Unlike praise, thanksgiving is a more direct expression of gratitude for what God has done. While Paul would have been heavily exposed to the idea and importance of praise, a primary emphasis of his teaching on prayer was having an attitude of thanksgiving (Stokes, *Talking with God* 56-58). One of many examples of this can be found in Ephesians. "Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph.5:19-20, NIV). Having a thankful heart should be one of the most distinctive traits of a believer (Graham).

Both praise and thanksgiving are building blocks for prayer because they focus on the goodness of God. They create intimacy with God, reminding the pray-er that God is present, God cares, and God is able to meet their needs. While praise is not identical to thanksgiving, Foster writes that we must not make too much of this difference, pointing out that praise and thanksgiving are often used interchangeably in Scripture (83).

Regardless of the emphasis (or lack thereof) placed on the distinction between the two, both praise and thanksgiving are highlighted in Scripture as integral to the prayer life of his people. This may be in part because they are not easily manipulated by wrong motives. However, prayer does include asking. So, when are we to ask, and how do we keep our motives pure?

Petition. Petitioning God in all circumstances is important because it builds a connection with him. Paul exhorts the Philippians not to worry, but to pray. He does not tell them to pray specifically about big things, or noble things, or even spiritual things. Rather, he tells them to pray in "every situation." Instead of worrying, they should present their requests to God through "prayer and petition" (Phil. 4:6). Paul did not indicate how God would specifically respond, but he does guarantee one outcome, that "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (v. 7). By relinquishing worry to God, people choose to release control and place their trust in him, finding peace that transcends understanding.

Many passages of Scripture go beyond promising peace and encourage believers to ask for anything in the name of Jesus, or according to His will, and it will be given to us (John 14:13,15:16,16:24; 1 John 5:14-15). Additional passages make a similar promise, adding other qualifiers, such as belief (Matt. 21:22, Mark 11:24), or "delight in the Lord" (Ps. 37:4). The very idea of God granting people anything they request is hard to fathom, and it is inconsistent with human experience. However, personal experience with the lack of "results" when praying does not give believers permission to read these passages as if they were part of a fairy tale that is too good to be true. These challenging

passages cannot be set aside as merely nice but unrealistic. Instead, these passages repeatedly affirm that God's people can pray with confidence, but must do so in his name and according to his will. Scripture is clear that knowing the will of God, at least in part, is not an impossible task (Rom. 12:2). Therefore, passages such as these should not discourage readers but challenge them to do what it takes to know the will of God, and inspire them with the knowledge that with him anything is possible (Luke 1:37).

People should pray for anything they want, as long as it is within the will of God. The sheer volume of passages with this message makes it compelling to do so. Not only do passages abound with this message, this type of prayer is consistent with the purpose of connecting with God. Petitions from the heart— that are according to the will of God— are intimate and connect us with him for three reasons. First, and not to be overlooked, is the bond created when a child asks a parent for something deeply desired, and the parent responds accordingly. This experience is even stronger when the child asks for something that is already in the parent's heart to give. Second, knowing the will of God requires that people seek intimacy with him to begin with. Third, these prayers provide a person the opportunity to participate with God in the advancement of his Kingdom as God answers them.

Believers are called to pray for anything they desire in God's will; Scripture provides many examples to clarify how this looks. Reviewing prayers of petition written by the Apostle Paul helps to provide a biblical foundation for what it means to petition God according to his will. Below is a table including a sample of topics about which Paul prayed. This table provides guidance to believers regarding some petitions that can be made with confidence, knowing they align with God's will in most any circumstance.

Table 2.1. A Sampling of Paul's Prayers of Petition

salvation	Rom. 10:1
deliverance from captivity	Rom. 15:31 2 Thess. 3:2
God's grace	1 Cor. 16:23, Gal. 6:18, Phil. 4:23, 1 Thess. 5:28
moral character	2 Cor. 13:7, Col. 1:10
restoration	2 Cor. 13:9
Spirit of Wisdom and revealed knowledge of God	Eph. 1:17, Col. 1:9-10
inner strength through the Holy Spirit	Eph. 3:16, Col. 1:11, 1 Tim. 1:12
clear and bold declaration of the Gospel	Eph. 6:19-20, Col. 4:2-4
that love would abound, leading to discernment and purity	Phil. 1:9-10, 1 Thess. 3:12-13
endurance with patience and joy	Rom. 15:5,13; Col. 1:11
sanctification	1 Thess. 5:23
God's glory	Rom. 15:6, 2 Thess. 1:12
peace	Rom. 15:13, 2 Thess. 3:16
mercy	2 Tim. 1:16-18

This table is a partial list of passages assembled by the blog Christ-Centered ("All the Prayers of Paul").

Petitioning according to God's will takes the focus away from self and places it on God and others. Paul models this in the prayers written in his letters (above). Aside from asking for deliverance from prison twice, and for the words to preach the gospel with boldness, his petitions focused on interceding on behalf of others. Friedrich Heiler identifies Paul's emphasis on intercession, claiming that Paul places intercessory prayer at the very center of the Christian devotional life (qtd. in Stokes, *Talking with God* 56-57).

Only God knows God's will. Therefore, only by abiding in God are people able to pray according to his will. Jesus tells his disciples that if they abide in him and his words abide in them they can pray with the assurance that their prayers will be answered (John 15:7). However, without spending time cultivating a relationship with God one cannot expect to this (Foster 194–96).

Summary

Knowing God's purpose for prayer can guide the pray-er in how to pray. The purpose of prayer is connection with God, with abiding in him being the pinnacle. Praise and thanksgiving focus attention on God's goodness, building relationship and heart knowledge. Petitioning anything we desire according to God's will both requires and allows Creator and Creation to advance the Kingdom together. This can only be accomplished through abiding and by the power of the Holy Spirit. True intercession is "living in the abiding presence of Christ" (Boatman 14).

Having the right heart is necessary in prayer. Righteousness cannot be achieved, but must be received with a humble spirit through the power of the blood of the cross. God knows the heart and desires authenticity, seeking to be the only audience of prayer. Finally, complete belief that includes trust, confidence, expectation, and joyful dependence, creates a strong bond. Once abiding in this intimacy, a believer can ask for anything and receive it knowing that it is according to the will of the Father. As the Father provides, the bond between the two is reinforced as they advance the Kingdom together.

Theological Foundations of Prayer

"No single practice more clearly defines a religion than the act of praying" (Miller 3).

Introduction

Prayer and theology are merely two sides of the same coin. One side is action and the other is belief, but the two cannot be separated. Not only are prayer and theology connected, they depend on the other for survival and growth. Theological understanding provides depth and guidance on how to approach the Almighty in prayer. The experience of prayer provides feedback to reshape theology in a way that cannot happen in isolation. The desert father, St. Evagrius of Ponticus, understood this relationship between prayer and theology when he wrote the following over 1,000 years ago, "If you are a theologian, you will truly pray, and if you truly pray, you will be a theologian" (chap.61). Prayer is the way people test their theology. It is first-person research about the nature of God through which theology is infused with life (Casiday 38; LeFevre 188; Clements 7).

What people believe about God greatly influences what they believe about prayer and how they practice it (Young 193). For this reason, providing a theological foundation for prayer, by exploring God's nature, is important. First, this study looks at the transcendence and immanence of God to determine how one might approach him. Second, it provides a summary of perspectives from various theologians regarding the impact prayer has on God and, subsequently, the world. This question predominantly seeks to determine if God's perfections can remain constant while simultaneously responding to the prayers of his creation.

The answers to these questions are far from clear. However, by exploring the questions and how others have tried to answer them, one discovers some common themes. From these, a theological foundation for prayer can be established based on four principles: (1) God is sovereign, (2) God's will is best, (3) God listens and cares, (4) God is moved to action by prayer. Each of these principles reinforces our biblical conclusion that a primary purpose of prayer is connection with God. It is about knowing God and being known by God.

Transcendence and Immanence of God

God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev. 1:7-10, 22:13). If one's theology of prayer does not begin and end with God, Christians cannot expect anything more from prayer than what humanity has to offer. For this reason our theology of prayer must start with God (Murr 22).

Scripture is clear that we pray to a Holy God, mighty and powerful. He is king over his creation with absolute sovereignty over both physical and spiritual realms (Gombos 55). While modern-day Christians may prefer to imagine praying to the "friend" they have in Jesus, one's theology of prayer is inconsistent with orthodox theology if it diminishes the awesome, perhaps even terrifying, otherness of God. The Old Testament offers numerous examples of encounters with God, the Lord Almighty to remind us of who he is. Uzziah died because he touched the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam. 6:7). Nahab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, died because they used "strange fire" in the tabernacle (Lev. 10:11). Not even Moses could look God in the face, and so God covered Moses with his hand as he passed over so Moses would not die (Exod. 3:22).

If God is a holy and sovereign creator-king, the attitude of our prayers must reflect that. Glorifying, celebrating, and honoring him is appropriate and necessary. God's magnificence is worthy of reverence and adoration (Murr 22). His presence must not be entered carelessly, but with alertness and vigilance (Gombos 60–80). Christians must humble themselves before the Lord Almighty, approaching his throne in prayer with fear and trembling (Harmless 347). Not to do so would be failing to acknowledge God for who he is.

Understanding the nature of God was at the heart of Jonathan Edwards' theology of prayer (Beck 20). Edwards held strongly that the "perfections" of God could not be compromised. According to Edwards, God is infinitely holy, sovereign, and omnipotent. These attributes are not dependent on any other source (35). However, God's independence from outside influence did not deter Edwards from encouraging his congregation to pray. In fact, he lifts up the transcendent and sovereign nature of God as a source of hope. Believers can pray with confidence, knowing that no request is too large for God's mighty outstretched hand that reigns over nations and nature itself (Edwards 113). Not only is God capable because of his natural attributes, but Edwards was convinced that God's moral perfections (character) were at the heart of why prayer is so effective (Kreider 438). God is not just all-powerful and all knowing. God is also perfect in his goodness, faithfulness, and righteousness. In short, God is perfectly good.

God is not only transcendent. He is close. He is with us. "God has chosen from eternity not to be a solitary God— not to be God without us" (Okholm 117). Indeed, the chasm between Creator and creation is vast, but God remains close to his people as well. In the desert, his presence accompanied the Hebrew people as a pillar of smoke and fire.

In time, God closed the gap completely through the incarnation of his Son. The incarnation of Christ was not just an event that brought God closer to humanity. It made God one with humanity.

> In his humanness, Christ became tired and rested. He became hungry and broke bread with his friends. He grew thirsty and drank. He laughed and wept as a human. He loved, grieved, mourned, and became angry as a human. He experienced pain as a human and ultimately died as a human. As a human, he made a sacrifice for the human penalty of sin charged to all of the sons and daughters of Adam. In so doing, Christ became the eschatological Adam who reconciled the broken relationship between the mundane and the Divine. (Goris, Rikhof, and Schoot)

At his death, Christ took the obstacle of sin in our relationship with him and declared victory over it. He then invited believers into an ongoing conversation when he sent his Spirit to dwell within them. No longer does humanity pray to a God that is only transcendent, but one that is immanent (Helvey 72). We are not alone.

Part of establishing a theological foundation of prayer in this project was to clarify that Christians pray to both a transcendent and an immanent God. When believers recognize that prayer is an opportunity to intimately fellowship with the Divine, they feel simultaneously an exhilarating and humbling experience (Hewitt 87). The same God that was so holy that Moses could not look at his face is still the same God, but now he calls us into his throne room as his children. The writer of Hebrews writes that God's children should approach his throne with confidence, knowing that they will receive his mercy and grace when they need it most (Heb. 4:16). This passage and others make it clear that Christians worship, serve, and pray to a transcendent and immanent God. He is a God that is all-powerful yet sensitive to the specific needs of his children. He knows everything about the foundations of the world and is keenly aware of our most intimate hopes and dreams. He is unchanging in his sovereignty, yet responsive to prayer. This

last statement may be the most vexing of all, challenging theologians for centuries. How can God be both unchanging and responsive to prayer?

Does Prayer Impact God?

A wide span exists of beliefs regarding the extent to which petitions impact God's will and, thus, the world. Some reduce all prayer to a psychological phenomenon that goes no farther than a person's own imagination. On the other end of the continuum are those who believe God is regularly being moved by prayer that not only determines how he will act, but even changes who he is. With the rise of modernism, the concept of conversing with a living personal God was challenged, and not unreasonably so. If God answers prayer, then why does he answer some prayers and not others? If God is omnipotent, why would he need to change his mind when request are made of him? These are fair questions that demand answers. Process theologians have approached this dilemma by defining God's perfections much more loosely than their predecessors, but at a cost. Below are some of the positions held by theologians, past and present, found largely in the work of Okholm in his thesis on petitionary prayer and providence.

Prayer is a monologue. Immanuel Kant highly influenced the development of theology. He held that the idea of influencing God through prayer was merely superstition. In spite of his position, he did not entirely negate the value of prayer. According to Kant, the value of prayer is "to establish goodness in ourselves, and repeatedly to awaken the disposition of goodness in the heart" (181). This perspective emphasizes the autonomy of individuals, making prayer a moral endeavor rather than a transformative process. It also

presumes that humans live in a closed system with no outside interference from the divine. Therefore, prayer is not about petitioning God, but about submitting to one's destiny and acknowledging divine greatness (Okholm 24).

German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach also believed that prayer is essentially a monologue. Like Kant, Feuerbach did not believe that God intervened in behalf of individuals who pray. Nor did he consider prayer a divine conversation. However, unlike Kant, he did not even consider prayer as a genuine thing. Instead, he held that God is merely a psychological construct, or alter ego, making prayer a form of self-projection (Okholm 46). Sigmund Freud analyzed prayer in a similar fashion, viewing it as a psychological coping mechanism humans use to deal with fears that they cannot handle on their own (Okholm 47).

Holding Two Incompatible Positions. Karl Barth tried to merge two seemingly contradictory positions. Barth was adamant that God's will is established and will not change; however, he also maintained that his creation influences him in prayer. While Barth's position is thought provoking, Okholm holds that it does not satisfactorily reconcile these two positions—specifically because Barth emphasized the sovereignty of God so much it "dilutes the claim that human petitions are taken seriously" (qtd. in. Okholm 4).

Unlike Kant and Feuerbach who discouraged petitioning for personal needs, Barth indicated that petition is at the very heart of prayer and that God is moved by prayer (qtd. in. Okholm 106–07). Barth wrote, "He is not deaf, he listens; more than that, he acts. He does not act in the same way whether we pray or not. Prayer exerts an influence upon

God's action, even upon his existence" (Barth 21). However, Barth also held that all true prayer has already been determined and prayed from the beginning of time through Christ (Okholm 124). According to Barth, God wills that he listens and responds to the prayers of his people, thus preserving the sovereignty of God (Bauman 59–60). But can this really be considered responding to prayer? How can believers' prayers really be their own if they have already been asked and answered in advance?

In Barth's defense, he recognized that the God of the Bible is a God that hears and responds to prayer. However, he was unwavering with his classical position on the nature of God's perfections. These perfections being that he is non-temporal (eternal), unchanging (immutable), and unaffected by the world (impassible). Charles Spurgeon had a similar theology of prayer, but acknowledged the tension between these two positions. His response was that prayer does not change God or his plan, but it does still affect him (Regal 95). While Barth's development of thought is not fully researched in this review, his unconvincing attempt to reconcile an unchanging God with one that responds to prayer beckons the reader to consider other options. Therefore, moving further along the continuum of theology is necessary to explain how prayer might make a difference in the world.

Letting Go of Classical Theology. For prayer to be meaningful, it must be biblically sound and honor the experience of Christian tradition, yet still make sense in the modern world. It is not eternal truth if it denies either. According to W. Norman Pittenger, the only way to do this is through process theology (12). Process theology resolves the tension between believing in an eternal, immutable, and impassible God, and a God that

is moved by prayer. They do so by redefining the perfections of God to allow for him to be temporal, mutable, and passible in some ways ("Process Theism"). Rather than the core unchanging essence of God being substance, he is love (Okholm 191). Love requires interaction that influences the other (202).

For process theologians, to exist is to influence or create. Therefore, while God is the *primary* creative force, he is not the only one. God and creation are co-creators, each exerting a degree of influence on the other, albeit unequal influence (Hartshorne and Reese 140; Hartshorne 113). As stated previously, process theology threatens classical theology's standard interpretation of God's immutability and impassibility. Rather than being separate, God is intertwined in some aspects with creation, and is therefore impacted by it. So, the question arises as to whether God is still sovereign in process theology.

Process theologians still maintain that God is sovereign because of the asymmetry in power between God and creation. However, sovereignty for the process theologian looks very different from what it does for Barth. Sovereignty for the process theologian only can extend as far as God's will, which eventually is realized but not with the same precision. This is because people have the capacity to respond to God's will as they choose, and thus impact God and creation with their response. Believers then, have the capacity to delay God's will or become co-creators with him in his will. Therefore, the goal of prayer according to Pittenger is coming into "conformity with God's purposes so that his will shall be done in and through the one who is praying" (qtd. in Okholm 185).

Danger lurks on the trails of process theology. One must remember that the main road has the security of having been travelled by many faithful saints and theologians for

many centuries. However, it seems necessary to explore some of these trails to better explain the nature of God and the world experienced by those who pray. One example of this is the need for God's people to know that God really hears and acts based on the prayers of his people. Not only does the experience of the saints indicate that God is moved to action by prayer, Scripture verifies it (Ps. 65:2-5, Iss. 65:24, Matt. 7:7-8, John 15:7, 1 John 5:14-15). Therefore, theologians must not reject process theology entirely.

Summary

No theology will ever be able to fully explain God, because to do so would be to nullify the fact that he is beyond human comprehension. Prayer, however, is the means to directly communicate with God and to receive revelation about his nature. It builds and sustains the believer's relationship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Helvey 72). It is a conversation that requires his people to glorify him, but invites them to abide in him as well.

Kant and Feuerbach tried to reduce God to something rational in a closed universe, which is not possible. Barth emphasized an all-powerful and immutable God at the expense of his intimacy and responsiveness. Process theologians insist that God and humanity influence one another. However, they do this at the risk of jeopardizing the critical understanding of God being wholly other, and sovereign over all creation. While this is a dangerous path that challenges long held beliefs about the perfections of God, it is a path that must be taken with humility, caution, and a Bible in hand.

Moving forward, the theological foundation for prayer that has been distilled holds four truths about God and/ or prayer. Specifically, these relate to petitions,

including intercessory prayer. Along with each of these truths are corresponding attitudes and/ or actions that naturally follow.

First, God is sovereign. Therefore, one must come humbly before him as Creator and King. His power is unlimited, except perhaps in some way regarding the human will. For this reason, believers should pray in God's will with boldness and with humility, trusting that nothing can stop the ultimate will of God.

Second, God's will is best. Therefore, believers must submit their will to his and abide in him. Christians must let him purify their hearts and minds so that they can lay aside their own agendas and pray according to his will. If they are to pray his will, they must take the time to listen. As people pray the will of God, they can take pleasure in the unity of building the kingdom together with God.

Third, God listens and cares. Therefore, pray-ers must be authentic. They must share their hearts with him and not hide their true feelings. While doing so, pray-ers must always remember that they are praying to the Almighty Creator and King. Brokenness, doubt, and even anger do not justify disrespect. One can cry and question while still honoring him.

Fourth, God's hand is moved by our prayers. Therefore, his children must petition him. The world awaits his Kingdom and the prayers of righteous people can help bring that about. Listening for his will or trying to accomplish his will through one's good deeds are not enough. No, believers are called to pray so that his power might be unleashed through them and into the world.

In conclusion, Christians must remember that prayer is about intimacy with God. For true intimacy to occur, pray-ers must remove all possible barriers, and let God

remove the ones that cannot be moved. These barriers are removed by acknowledging him, crying out to him, being cleansed by him, and ultimately abiding in him.

Emerging Adulthood

This section explores the contributing factors to, and characteristics of, emerging adulthood. By understanding emerging adulthood, relational forces and attitudes can be addressed in formulating an effective intervention related to attachment to God. This requires knowledge of how emerging adults think, how they act, and what they value. This section will draw heavily from the research done by the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) and subsequent works based on this research. Additional sources were consulted to establish a greater understanding of how this new life stage came to be in the first place.

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett was the first to define emerging adulthood as a life stage ("Learning to Stand Alone"). In decades past, people were considered young adults after adolescence. They began to focus on adult life and typically took on the responsibilities of adulthood by the time they were in their early twenties. For a variety of reasons, the time period between adolescence and young adulthood has extended, thus creating a new phase in life labeled, "emerging adulthood" (Brooks). Arnett outlines five features of being an emerging adult. Emerging adulthood is an: (1) Age of instability, (2) Age of feeling in-between, (3) Age of possibilities, (4) Age of identity exploration, and (5) Age of self-focus (Munsey).

Emerging adulthood is an age of instability and feeling in-between. Typically, no other life stage has the amount of significant transitions happening in one's life as at this

time. Emerging adults are likely to have multiple residences, multiple jobs, multiple schools, and, often, a complete transition of friendships over the course of a few short years. During this time, the primary goal of emerging adults is to become self-sufficient (Smith and Snell 34). Rather than young adulthood where individuals have begun to be more established in life, emerging adults are still in process. This is one of the primary reasons Arnett argues for this new developmental life stage term. He writes, "the term *emerging* captures the dynamic, changeable, fluid quality of the period" (Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development" 477). While instability can bring a degree of apprehension, most emerging adults see it as a time of possibilities.

Emerging Adulthood is an age of possibilities. Very little has been established regarding the course of their lives, and they tend to have a very positive outlook on their future. Those who grew up in difficult (or seemingly difficult) environments have an opportunity to break away and start anew. Moving forward, they feel confident in their ability to make a better future for themselves (Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road* 16). In one survey of 18-24-year olds, 96 percent agreed with the statement, "I am very sure that someday I will get to where I want to be in life" (Hornblower). This may be a bit over optimistic. Nonetheless, "while emerging adulthood lasts, they have a chance to change their lives in profound ways" (Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road* 17).

Emerging adulthood is an age of identity exploration. Three primary categories of identity formation are love, work, and worldview. Adolescents begin this process, but rarely have established their identity by the time they reach 18. In love, emerging adults are more likely to be looking for a lifelong partner than adolescents who are dating. Work

experiences also become more about preparing for the future. However, preparation for the future should not be confused with commitment to the future. Emerging adulthood is a time of exploration and they are "loathe to close doors or burn bridges" (Smith and Snell 81). For this reason, emerging adults are more likely than previous generations to switch majors in college and have multiple sexual partners before making commitments (Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development" 473–74). They are not looking to settle down (Smith and Snell 56).

An important part of identity formation for emerging adults includes establishing their own worldview. Emerging adults identify "making independent choices" as one of the most important criteria for becoming an adult (Arnett, "Learning to Stand Alone"). In their minds, merely accepting the beliefs of their parents would "represent a kind of failure, an abdication of their responsibility to think for themselves" (Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood : The Winding Road* 177).

Emerging Adulthood is an age of self-focus. That self-focus is common in emerging adults makes perfect sense. Free from the rules of their homes that they were forced to obey in adolescence and without the responsibilities of adulthood, emerging adults spend a significant amount of their time focused on self (Munsey). Few decisions are made for them, and they make few decisions for others. Self-focus may, in fact, be what is needed at this stage in life to learn how to become self-sufficient (Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood : The Winding Road* 13). Whether or not emerging adults' self-focus is healthy or not is covered in the *beliefs, values, and morality* section.

Contributing Factors

Many societal factors contribute to the birth of emerging adulthood as a new phase of life. These factors are closely related to one another, but not necessarily in a direct cause-and-effect manner. They weave together in a more fluid way, influencing one another and reinforcing common attitudes and behaviors. This web of influential components was divided into two primary concepts for this review; the delay of career, and the delay of marriage.

The number of high school graduates enrolling in college prolongs the time before emerging adults take on the adult responsibility entering the workforce. Education beyond high school is now the norm. With more jobs requiring a college education and beyond, high school graduates are more inclined to enroll in college rather than immediately enter the workforce (Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood : The Winding Road* 120). College is not only becoming more of a necessity, but is also more accessible to diverse populations. Beginning with the GI Bill, and now through many other grants and scholarship opportunities, many students previously unable to attend college for financial reasons are now able to (Smith et al. 13; Dierberg 15). Parents are also now more likely to subsidize their children during these years, likely understanding the importance of higher education. While these economic factors have been instrumental in the rise of college enrollment, they are not the only reasons.

The rise in female enrollment in colleges has risen dramatically in the past 50 years, thereby increasing the total number of students. In 1979, for the first time (and every year since) women enrolled in higher education outnumbered men who were enrolled. In 2014, women accounted for about 57% of all students enrolled in degree-

granting institutions (Anderson). This surge of female enrollment began in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the expectations women had about the workplace changed dramatically (*Why Do Women Outnumber Men in College?*). Birth control also made college more appealing to women, allowing them to focus on their education without concerns of raising children (Smith et al. 14).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over the course of the past sixty years, the average median age a person gets married for the first time has risen by seven years. In 2016, the average median age for males to be married was 29.5 and for females 27.4 (*Median Age at First Marriage*). One reason for this might be attributed to both men and women pursuing higher education prior to becoming established in a career. Birth control is another factor. The ability to separate sex from pro-creation gives both men and women more freedom to engage in sexual relationships without the responsibilities of parenthood (Smith et al. 14). This likely lessens the urgency for marriage in the minds of many.

Emerging adulthood has come about because the time between adolescence and adulthood continues to extend. As noted in this section, this phenomenon is not necessarily the result of a lazy or lost generation. Instead, it is largely the natural result of many social forces converging. The primary two are the need for and access to higher education prior to entering the workforce, and the ability to plan the timing of marriage and family through birth control options. Having looked at the primary characteristics of emerging adulthood and some of the social forces surrounding it, the next section focuses on the beliefs, values, and morality of emerging adults.

Values and Morality of Emerging Adults

This section explores what emerging adults value and how they approach matters of morality. Most notably, self-focus and identity exploration seem to heavily influence the values and morals of emerging adults.

Values: A self-centered perspective. Most emerging adults value what is immediate and specifically impacts their close surroundings, remaining uninvolved with things outside of their private lives. They are typically disengaged with what some would consider political and civic responsibilities. Not only are they unengaged, but they are often uninformed and distrustful of politics in general (Smith et al. 195–96). The Associated Press GfK poll in 2014 confirms Smith's findings. Of six civic activities measured, adults under 30 "dropped sharply from their parents' generation" in their level of participation ("Young Americans"). However, one anomaly was noticeable.

Volunteerism may be an area in which emerging adults participate in civic life. In the poll previously mentioned, the one category of civic duty adults under 30 scored more highly than previous generations on was volunteerism. In 2014, 20% of adults under 30 reported that they had volunteered, compared to 14% from the same age group 25 years prior ("Young Americans"). Some use this to argue that emerging adults are civic minded, just politically disenfranchised. However, the Census Annual Current Population Supplement shows volunteerism of 19-24-year olds 8-10% lower than those older than 24 each year from 2002-2009 (*CIRCLE » Volunteering/Community Service*). Another factor to consider in this rise of volunteerism is the amount of programs that now require "volunteer" service hours prior to certification. According to Smith, what emerged from

the NSYR interviews was the sense from emerging adults that they felt they could not make much of a difference and were, therefore, not inclined to give what little time they felt they had (Smith et al. 210–11). Rather than engaging in social change groups, emerging adults spend their time managing the relationships around them.

Emerging adults are also focused on themselves when it comes to spending their financial resources. Smith et al. write about their research, "What we found is that few emerging adults expressed concerns about… a lifestyle devoted to boundless material consumption. Most are either positive or neutral about mass consumer materialism" (71). The idea that people might change their own lifestyle for the collective good was "nearly unimaginable" (86). Of the roughly 1/3 of emerging adults that did express reservations about excessive consumerism, most saw no solution. People who have a lot of money deserve to be able to spend it however they want (86). This touches on perhaps the strongest common conviction emerging adults have: the individual right to decide what is best.

Morality: What is most prevalent about emerging adult morality is the belief that it is individualistic. *Individualistic is different than individualism (which also is descriptive of emerging adult morality).* Individualism defines morality in terms of what is best for the individual. What is right or good is defined by what is in the individual's best interest. This is in contrast to collectivism which considers the common good when defining morality (Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road* 165). This is different from an individualistic approach to morality. Individualistic morality holds that one universal morality does not exist. Instead, each individual determines what is moral. A full 60% of

emerging adults researched in the NSYR had this individualistic approach to morality, saying that "moral rights and wrongs are essentially matters of individual opinion" (Smith et al. 21). Two factors seem to heavily influence emerging adults to feel this way.

First, emerging adults are in an identity-exploring, self-focused stage of life. Both of these features of emerging adulthood emphasize individuality. Being focused on self prohibits thinking about what is good for the whole. Exploring identity involves keeping options open and having the freedom to choose. Therefore, realizing that establishing any type of common morality would restrict personal choice, emerging adults would prefer to leave it up to the individual to decide between right and wrong.

Moral relativism is the second factor seemingly influencing emerging adults to think morality is individualistic. Moral relativism holds that morality involves no absolutes. It is purely a social construct. When asked, 1/3 of the respondents in the NSYR were absolute in their agreement with moral relativism. Of the 2/3 remaining, few were able to give clear arguments explaining their reservations (Smith et al. 27, 33). While they had reservations about moral relativism, they had difficulty identifying an objective source for morality.

When asked about the source of moral authority, emerging adults gave a variety of answers. Some appealed to the law as a standard (23%). Forty percent cited the opinions of others as an influential source for morality. An equal percentage indicated God. Not hurting others was the most commonly reported answer (53%) (Smith et al. 36–47).

Many emerging adults rely on feelings to determine morality. When asked how they would make a difficult moral decision if they were unsure about right and wrong,

respondents were given four options. The most common answer given was to do what made them feel happy (39%). This was followed by following the advice of a parent (34%), doing what God or Scripture says (19%), and lastly doing what would get them ahead (9%) (Smith et al. 50–51). Analysis of the answers to several questions regarding morality determined that 72% of the respondents described their moral decision-making in some form or another to be based on instinct, such as a "sense of peace." Perhaps even more revealing is that 34% of those interviewed could not even answer how they would make a difficult moral decision when first asked (52).

Further questioning about morality led researchers to conclude that many emerging adults have not been taught to think about morality. If they had, they would understand that moral individualism and relativism are not logically sustainable positions (Smith et al. 60). Emerging adults have grown up believing they cannot know truth outside of their own experience, leaving them "imprisoned in their own subjective selves." Without an understanding that a knowable standard of morality for the common good might exist, emerging adults are left to make moral decisions based on what feels right and works in their own best interests (Smith and Snell 47). Furthermore, this impacts the faith lives of emerging adults.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and Emerging Adults

This section describes emerging adult beliefs regarding faith. First, it looks at three common themes found in the faith life of emerging adults. Second, the impact of consumerism, in society and the church, upon the faith of emerging adults is considered.

Third, moralistic therapeutic deism is defined as the best descriptor of faith for many emerging adults.

The description of emerging adult faith found below does not resemble the discipleship to which Jesus calls his followers to in the Bible, but before condemning emerging adults two important points must be remembered. First, every generation has a faithful few, and emerging adults are no different. Some emerging adults are clear about their faith, and they passionately and obediently pursue God. Second, there are "no so-called youth problems that aren't simply human problems now come to roost among the young'" (Dean, *Practicing Passion* 11). The challenges to discipleship that face emerging adults today are problems they inherited from the churches that raised them (Dean, *Almost Christian* 12).

Common themes. As one might expect from what has already been presented, the faith expressed by many emerging adults is not an orthodox one, Christian or otherwise. Rather, it is faith that has been adapted to suit the needs of the believer. Three features commonly found in the faith of emerging adults are as follows:

1) It rejects or is ignorant of basic doctrine.
2) It is focused on personal needs/requires little sacrifice
3) It resists authority outside of self.

First, emerging adults do not typically embrace the core doctrines of Christian faith. Barna Research Group conducted a study of teens and published some of the results in a book entitled, *Real Teens.* In this work, 48% of teens identifying themselves as born-again Christians agreed with the statement, "If a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during his or her life, he/she will earn a place in heaven" (Barna,

Real Teens 165). Admittedly, teens and emerging adults are not identical, but studies have also determined that the religious beliefs of emerging adults have not drastically changed from when they were teens (NSYR multi-phase study).

Emerging adults often embrace what is common across faiths as opposed to holding on to differences (Smith and Snell 146). Along this same line of thinking, more than half of emerging adults believe that practicing multiple faiths at once is okay (136). While there are many positive commonalities among different faiths to be sure, emerging adults seem to have forgotten what makes Christianity distinctive and powerful - the cross.

Second, emerging adult faith is typically focused on personal needs. "A growing number of people believe that the local church exists primarily to meet their spiritual and family needs" (Rooney 4). Emerging adults who have grown up in homes that have this attitude about church are not equipped for the challenges of true discipleship. Instead they grow up with a lack of humility, thinking that church is all about "me" (Kinnaman and Hawkins 118). As they understand church to be a consumer product, thinking of God in the same way is not a long jump for them. When faith is processed with a focus on self, emerging adults would subsequently only embrace a faith that they feel meets their needs.

The third common theme of emerging adult faith is that it is unwilling to submit. This is not only true of emerging adults. "The world is in constant revolt against the authority of God" (Mackay 26). Since the fall, humanity is all impaired in the ability to trust God (Pannenberg 106). This leads to the attempt to control all aspects of life (Pieper 147). The life stage of emerging adulthood is one that emphasizes identity exploration, and highly seeks independence. These themes lead emerging adults to reject religious

dogma and magnify the propensity of humanity's fallen nature to resist the authority of God.

Raised in Consumer Society. North America in the 21st century is predominantly a consumer driven society. This means more than a free market economy. A consumer driven society has an implicit understanding that all things have some type of economic value. Everything becomes a commodity with a value linked to what it can be exchanged for and does not have intrinsic value for what it is. Without intrinsic value, things only have value based on their usefulness to us, even if those things are people (Jethani 36–37).

The consumer marketplace places a premium on personal choice and customized experience, which has impacted the expectations people have regarding church (Barna, *Revolution* 62). The church is now faced with meeting the needs of the people, or people will not come because the perceived value is low. This shifts the purpose of church to focusing on the consumer and meeting the consumer's needs, rather than about worshiping and serving God and his Kingdom (Platt 70). One pastor provides an example of this by describing an encounter with a parishioner who was displeased because the pastor was failing to make "him feel better about himself" in worship (Rooney 67). That was not an isolated incident. Only one of four believers responded affirmatively to the statement that the primary beneficiary of worship is God" (Barna, *Revolution* 32; Rooney 58). When the focus of worship is no longer about pleasing God, the research finding that 80% of attenders do not feel like they have entered God's presence during worship is not surprising (Barna, *Revolution* 31).

Consumerism is linked to MTD because MTD reduces God to being a commodity that is valuable only when useful. Limited to the roles of Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist, God is not revered, but "a force we control and a resource we plunder" to meet our need (Jethani 38). Jethani continues, writing about the selfish nature of consumerism, "The God of Consumer Christianity does not inspire awe and wonder because he is nothing more than a commodity to be used for our personal satisfaction and self-achievement" (38). Jethani makes the point here that God ceases to be God once his only purpose is to serve people as they see fit.

Rather than challenging young people with the hard truth of the gospel, programming for youth and emerging adults often attempts to entice them to the faith with a message that is easier to accept. Dean challenges the church not to model a life of "ho-hum assent" to a distant God, but instead one of "passionate surrender" to a loving God that is involved in our lives (*Almost Christian* 12).By making this "commodity" less expensive to youth, an entire generation has grown up without understanding the intrinsic, awe-inspiring nature of God.

The church has offered emerging adults a Trojan horse in the form of a more appealing "Christianity" more aptly described as moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD). MTD is a "gift" that does not demand much, is flexible, and promises to meet their needs. Unfortunately, this gift is not a blessing but a curse. Marketing God and the church in more palatable and appealing ways to teens and the un-churched may be labeled as intentional outreach strategies. However, the church would not need to do this if it had not already reduced God to a commodity.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD). MTD is a term created by Smith and Denton to describe the faith of teens after the NSYR was conducted. The third phase of this longitudinal study yielded similar results when the same respondents were emerging adults, showing that MTD is equally prevalent in emerging adulthood (Smith and Snell). Smith and Denton describe five core beliefs of MTD:

1) A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5) Good people go to heaven when they die.

(Smith and Denton 162–63).

MTD impacts faith, but i is not a religion in its own right. It is like a parasite that latches on to a host religion because it cannot live on its own. Similar to a parasite, MTD weakens its host without the host even recognizing the danger until it is too late. Many emerging adults still claim to be Christian, but the faith they proclaim is merely a shell that serves as a host for MTD. MTD sucks out what is most powerful and defining about Christianity, and replaces it with what brings "happiness" or what is interpersonally "nice" (Dean, *Almost Christian* 12–14).

MTD is self-focused, impersonal, and not demanding. Smith and Denton describe the God of MTD as a "Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist" always ready to help out in times of need and one that exists to make "people feel better about themselves," but not become "personally involved in the process" (165). The biblical concept of calling disciples to love others sacrificially and submit to God does not exist in MTD. Instead, it is a low-commitment, compartmentalized set of beliefs focused on personal happiness,

rather than personal transformation (Dean, *Almost Christian* 30). Where did emerging adults get the idea that MTD is compatible with Christianity?

Conclusion. The combination of a culture driven by consumerism and the characteristics of emerging adulthood make it no surprise that few emerging adults are interested in the God of orthodox Christian faith. The life-stage of emerging adults makes little about this God appealing. First, emerging adults tend to have an individualistic mindset toward morality, preferring to trust feelings (such as "inner peace") rather than any universal source of moral authority to be their guide. Second, emerging adulthood is a life stage that is predominately focused on self, and meeting personal needs. This focus is reinforced by our consumer-driven society. Much more appealing is the "Divine Butler" and "Cosmic Therapist" of MTD that does not demand much, but is available when called upon. These qualities have made the god represented in MTD the god many have chosen to "purchase." Unfortunately, this understanding of God is a fabrication and therefore cannot lead to a relationship with him.

Spiritual Formation: Beyond MTD Through Prayer

For emerging adults to connect with God, they must discard moralistic therapeutic deism and embrace the fullness of life Christ promised and for which he died. Setran and Kiesling write about fostering spiritual formation in emerging adults and offer a framework for doing so. They write that faithful discipleship requires that emerging adults do the following: move beyond moralism by reshaping their loves, move beyond therapy by living sacrificially for the glory of God, and move beyond deism by practicing the presence of God (30–53). Based on this framework, the next section will address

moralism, therapeutic mindset, and deism, along with Setran's recommended steps for moving beyond them. A short description of how prayer with the real, transcendent, and immanent God of the universe might also achieve this end follow each of these. Specifically, it will establish how the intimacy of prayer moves us beyond moralism, the transcendence of God moves us beyond therapy, and the immanence of God moves us beyond deism.

Moralism. Many in the church have reduced *Christianity* to simply being a moral compass rather than a divine narrative in which they are a part. Kara E. Powell, Brad M. Griffin, and Cheryl A. Crawford reflect upon their research on college juniors who had attended youth groups. When asked "what it means to be a Christian," thirty-five percent of these students did not even mention Jesus. The most common answer given to the faith's central characteristic was moralistic in nature, "loving others" (29). By lifting out general moral principles from the Christian faith and making them primary, a relationship with Christ and the church becomes secondary. Furthermore, morality separated from the scriptural narrative and defined in loose terms, such as "loving others," is not formative. It is individualistic, does not carry the authority of the church or Scripture, and therefore is subject to change. Rather than shaping a person, these morals can be shaped to align with almost any chosen lifestyle. For this reason, while many emerging adults still hold religious beliefs, ultimately these beliefs do not typically drive their "priorities, commitments, values, and goals" (Mollica 7–8).

Beyond Moralism. When considering spiritual formation, the church also can make the mistake of reducing discipleship to moralistic terms. Setran and Kiesling encourage

spiritual leaders of emerging adults to move beyond moralism. They hold that there should be a focus on the heart as opposed to emphasizing compliance with certain biblical standards (which, they may not even agree, are important). Trying to manage behavior without a heart change is pharisaical, and often futile or merely temporary. Setran and Kiesling emphasize that it is the heart which is the source of change, citing Paul David Tripp, who connects a "root and fruit" metaphor to our heart and behavior (qtd. in Setran and Kiesling 30).

Love for God is a more important element in spiritual formation than managing behaviors, and perhaps even more important than beliefs. What a person loves is that which often shapes her most significantly (J. K. A. Smith 83). Setran and Kiesling identify two critical strategies to help emerging adults embrace God as their first love. The first is to help them identify idols that distract or diminish love for God. In a consumer-driven society, many voices tell emerging adults how their needs can be met. However, Christianity is not about balancing and enjoying the many pleasures of life. It is about the joy that comes from being single minded in our love for Christ. The second strategy proposed to encourage this single-minded love is to paint a beautiful picture of Christ that stirs the hearts of emerging adults. Avoiding the temptations of life is too difficult without a more compelling vision to look at. For this reason, Setran and Kiesling implore teachers to introduce emerging adults to the fullness of God's glory through teaching with "creativity" and "narrative power" (31–36).

The intimacy of prayer reaches beyond moralism. The intimacy of prayer creatively and powerfully presents Christ for the purpose of reshaping the loves of emerging adults. Rather than focusing on teaching (even Holy Spirit-empowered teaching), prayer places

an individual into direct encounter with the living God. In this encounter, God is able to reveal himself to the individual in the most perfect and powerful way. It is also the place where God is invited to search the heart and reveal false idols that compete for the devotion of the pray-er. Nothing more powerfully inspires than the revelation of Christ through the Holy Spirit (Teykl and Ponder 204–05).

Christian prayer has the power to reshape loves by emphasizing that God is real and desires relationship. He is not a theoretical set of beliefs. In Christian prayer, a child can reach out to the Father and receive his life-giving love. It is not simply a tool to be used when in need as in MTD. Henri J. M. Nouwen holds that the movement from illusion to prayer is foundational: "It is through this movement that we reach out to God, our God, who is eternally real and from whom all reality comes forth" (114). The pray-er experiences that God is real through this loving interaction and is ultimately shaped by it.

Understanding and experiencing the covenantal relationship found in the biblical narrative is necessary to move beyond moralism. While telling the stories and teaching their lessons can bring historical understanding, prayer incorporates a personal dimension. Through prayer, pray-ers are able to experience the love of God by becoming a part of the narrative. They are able to personally enter into the story, and thus the covenant relationship that moves them beyond moralism. Terry Teykl and Lynn Ponder outline six ways God is revealed in both the Ark of the Covenant and in Jesus Christ, the vessel for his New Covenant with humanity. In their respective times, both vessels:

1. Display God's Power and Authority
2. Communicate God's Will
3. Give Us Victory
4. Demonstrate His Favor and Delight In Us
5. Confirm His Mystery and Uniqueness
6. Provide Atonement for Sin

(chaps. 5–6)

Prayer can reshape the loves of emerging adults by connecting them personally to these powerful truths.

Perhaps the most intimate prayer is the prayer of "first love." This is a prayer that seeks nothing other than the presence of God (Teykl and Ponder 194–97). The intimacy and revelation experienced in this type of prayer may be unmatched due to its absence of selfish motivation. However, engaging in this type of prayer presumes that the first love of the pray-er already is God and moving beyond moralism focuses on reshaping loves rather than reinforcing them. For this reason, the prayer of "first love" is not used in this research.

Therapy. The focus on personal happiness within moralistic therapeutic deism undermines Christ's calling to his disciples to be sacrificial servants. With personal gain as the primary emphasis, faith is not about serving a holy God, but about being served. Christ himself is valued not because he saves us from our sin, but instead because he is a source of comfort or even protection from pain (Crabb 77). With such a high perspective of self, individuals are free to keep or discard elements of the faith based on the perceived need. This predictably leads to holding on to what feels right and discarding what is challenging, ultimately resulting in a faith where Christ is no longer the master, but the mascot. Emerging adults are not formed in the image of Christ, but into an image of their own happiness (Setran and Kiesling 24; Teykl and Ponder 11–13).

Beyond Therapy. By reclaiming our need for grace and our call to discipleship, ministry leaders can help emerging adults move beyond the therapeutic function of MTD (Setran

and Kiesling 37–39). To understand the need for grace, emerging adults must first understand that sin is something bigger than bad behavior. Sin is the all-encompassing condition of the heart that (without the grace of Christ) forms our identity. Our sin nature is contradictory to the therapeutic message of self-esteem espoused by MTD. However, it is only with this understanding of sin that emerging adults will seek out the healing, transformative grace of Jesus Christ (Holmes 59; Wilhoit 60; Setran and Kiesling 37). Just as grace is not about self-esteem, discipleship is not about the therapeutic value of self-improvement. It is not about making oneself better, but about denying self and serving Christ. MTD may even lead some emerging adults toward sacrificial service as a means to pursue self-actualization or to becoming a "better Christian." Alternatively, discipleship calls followers to become living sacrifices. The difference is who is in control (Setran and Kiesling 38). C.S. Lewis writes that Christ did not come to "torment your natural self, but to kill it," and if you hand your whole life to Jesus, he will give you a new one—his own (195–97).

Setran and Kiesling encourage leaders to help emerging adults extend their personal timelines beyond their twenties and adopt a harvest mentality regarding discipleship. While living according to MTD might cost little presently, it does not offer much in the long term. With a longer perspective in mind, the higher cost of denying oneself certain pleasures in the present may prove to be a great benefit later in life. Beyond earthly life, the tremendous benefits of treasures stored up in heaven more than compensate for the cost of following Christ. One critical piece in this is to remind emerging adults that earthly results are not always evident. Part of being a disciple is living by faith and not by sight (39–43).

The transcendence of God in prayer reaches beyond therapy. Focusing on God's transcendence while in prayer moves emerging adults beyond therapy because they are confronted with the reality that personal satisfaction is not the ultimate goal in life. Unlike prayer in the context of MTD, God's glory is acknowledged and revealed. This exposes their desperate need for grace and reveals to them why becoming a living sacrifice is a worthwhile proposition.

The awe-inspiring, terrifying, holy otherness of God highlights our need for grace. This is no more clearly portrayed in the Bible than when Isaiah cries out in God's presence, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isa. 6:5). Isaiah had no misconception about his sinful nature in that moment when he witnessed the transcendence of God sitting on his throne in that smoke-filled temple. It was a moment that did not make him feel good about himself as in MTD. Instead, it brought him to his knees, positioning himself for what God had for him next.

Praying to a transcendent God helps emerging adults live a life of costly discipleship, sowing into the Kingdom with a harvester's mentality. Isaiah was not only humbled and terrified by God's transcendence. He was compelled and empowered to respond to God's call (Isa. 5:8). When focused on the glory of the transcendent otherness of God, the mind of an emerging adult becomes transformed to do likewise. Words like "I" and "me" begin to lose their appeal (C. T. Lewis 368). Once God's glory captures the heart of emerging adults, a new and healthier perspective is able to emerge. This perspective does not put self at the center, but God. It is the perspective that God is not merely a part of the emerging adult's life, but the emerging adult becomes a part of God's

life (Foster 15). This is why prayer that focuses on God's transcendence moves emerging adults beyond therapy, to glorifying God through costly formation.

Deism. Moralistic therapeutic deism resists the notion that God is actively involved in the world today. In line with MTD, those emerging adults identifying themselves as Christians often do not interact with God on a regular basis, relegating religion to something that remains in the background (Smith and Snell 145). This may in part be due to imbalanced theology and/or a lack of demonstrating discipleship in local churches and homes. Mainline Protestantism has emphasized the moralistic tone of the Gospel, often preaching the love of neighbor to the exclusion of the message of salvation. At the other end of the theological spectrum, evangelical churches focusing too heavily on becoming "saved" in a one-time decision may fail to communicate the importance of depending on Christ in an ongoing relationship (Setran and Kiesling 26). Regardless of theology, the lack of demonstrated faith practices in the home may be the most significant contributing factor to the rise of MTD. Without examples of living faith while growing up, emerging adults are more prone to believe that God is distant. Conversely, those who actively pursue faith as emerging adults are more likely to have been raised in homes where their parents actively sought out ways to grow spiritually and regularly prayed with others (Benson and Eklin; Roberto). Since returning to childhood is not an option for emerging adults, the church has to find ways of breaking their perception that God is distant.

Beyond Deism. Emerging adults must practice living in the presence of God to understand that he is not a distant God but an immanent God. This begins with realizing that as incarnate beings, their bodies need to be transformed as well as their minds

(Willard, *Divine Conspiracy* 322). They cannot merely be taught spiritual truth. They must adopt life practices that align with God and his Kingdom, and establish personal disciplines to help them grow in their faith. According to Setran and Kiesling, ministry leaders must help emerging adults understand how their bodily practices impact their hearts and how their habits influence their direction. Part of this includes helping them to learn how to critique culture. Encouraging emerging adults to practice spiritual disciplines is another primary role of ministry leaders (44–46). Spiritual disciplines are commonly categorized into two types: 1) disciplines of abstinence which disrupt our daily routine to provide space for God, and 2) disciplines of engagement which actively connect us to the power and grace of God (Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines* 158; Willard, *Divine Conspiracy* 322). Setran and Kiesling highlight the importance of the disciplines of fasting, silence and solitude, secrecy, study of scripture, singing, and confession for emerging adults.

The immanence of God in prayer reaches beyond deism. Prayer is the most fundamental way Christians can practice the presence of God. In prayer, God is immanently experienced as God with us. Historian Heiler writes that prayer is essentially a "living communion of man with God" (362). Leech echoes this sentiment, describing prayer as a "sharing in the Divine nature," and that it "is the movement of God to man and of man to God." He makes this connection even more boldly by stating, "Prayer is God" (7–9). These statements by Leech not only emphasize the immanence of God in prayer, but also that God must be the initiator and primary focus of prayer.

To practice the presence of God in prayer, emerging adults must set self aside and learn to listen to and make God the focus of prayer. Prayer cannot be approached with the

mindset of changing God's will to match their will. This self-centered approach to prayer inherently encroaches on God's sovereignty, not only presenting a theological problem, but also undermining the purpose of being in his transforming presence. As stated previously, prayer is about sharing in God's Divine nature, not the other way around. Therefore, emerging adults (and all disciples) must learn to set aside their own will, listen, and pray according to God's will (Goldsworthy, chap.4). Only when emerging adults listen for the will of God in prayer do they practice his presence. However, listening is only one way by which prayer is practicing God's presence.

Prayer (particularly intercessory prayer) is a doubly powerful form of practicing God's presence because it not only requires the pray-er to listen for God's will, it gives the pray-er the opportunity to cooperate with God in the advancement of his Kingdom (Leech 25). Many have experienced the presence of God while serving the poor, advocating for social justice, or preaching the gospel. However, these have all been done without practicing God's presence as well. Prayer is different, specifically intercessory prayer. Foster writes about intercessory prayer that if "we truly love people, we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this will lead us to prayer (191)."

Researching Prayer and Attachment to God

Previous research on prayer and attachment theory was reviewed to determine how to proceed with researching the effectiveness of this intervention. Most prayer research has previously focused on measuring prayer's impact on the object/subject of prayer, specifically in relationship to physical health (Hill and Pargament 65). The

primary study that focuses on the person praying categorizes and measures four types of prayer (Poloma and Gallup). However, none of these four types accurately describe the unselfish praise and intercession model of prayer being proposed as an intervention for this study. Additionally, most of the prayer research reviewed also took place prior to the current development of attachment to God theory. After a review of attachment theory and its relevance in spiritual formation, the researcher determined that attachment to God was an important variable to be measured to determine the effectiveness of prayer. This section first provides a glimpse of the importance and relevance of attachment theory and attachment to God, followed by a review of previous prayer research. Finally, it reviews the specific relationship between prayer and attachment to God.

Attachment Theory

> Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind. "Pooh!" he whispered.
> "Yes, Piglet?"
> "Nothing," said Piglet, taking Pooh's paw. "I just wanted to be sure of you." (Milne)

Attachment to God is a critical measure of faith because it involves both belief and action. It is relationship. Its origins come from studying the relationship between infants and parents. However, it has expanded to encompass the bond a person of any age has with someone that person considers "stronger and wiser" (Cassidy 12). Attachment is "experienced as loving and/or feeling loved" (Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* 32). It is Piglet saying to Pooh, "I just wanted to be sure of you."

More formally, Ainsworth established five defining characteristics of attachment relationships: 1) the attached person seeks proximity to the caregiver; 2) the caregiver provides care and protection (a haven of safety); 3) the caregiver provides a sense of security (secure base from which to explore); 4) the threat of separation causes anxiety in the attached person; and 5) the loss of the caregiver would cause grief (792–812). In the study of religion, God is the attachment figure, and research indicates that this attachment relationship uniquely predicts psychological well-being among religious measures (Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* 70).

Attachment to God relates to core questions relating to Christian spiritual formation, and God as: 1) a source of love and security, a rock and fortress, 2) a present help in time of need, 3) a source of the security needed to go out into the world to fulfill the Great Commission. These issues are all related to one's attachment to God.

Infants. Attachment theory was originally introduced by Bowlby as a psychological framework for studying relationships between children and their primary caregivers. Bowlby proposed that children are predisposed to maintain proximity to their caregivers as a "safe haven" in times of danger. The caregiver not only serves as a shelter, but also provides a "secure base" from which to explore (Bowlby). Ainsworth advanced this area of research with the Strange Situation, putting infants in unfamiliar situations and observing their responses when a primary caregiver was near or was temporarily absent. From these observations, Ainsworth et al. identified three primary types of attachment: secure, avoidant, and resistant. Further study revealed a fourth type of attachment (disoriented/ disorganized), which was later added (Main and Solomon). These

attachment styles are generated from internal working models established in infancy regarding the perceived reliability of their primary caregiver being responsive and available. Internal working models are malleable, however they are resistant to change (Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* 38). Bowlby did not develop his theories of attachment beyond infancy, but did hold that a person's internal working model of attachment had lifelong impact (qtd. in Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* 39).

Adult romantic relationships. Based on the three primary infant attachment styles discovered by Ainsworth, Cindy Hazan and Phil Shaver created three parallel versions to study attachment and its impact on romantic relationships among adults. They created definitions for secure attachment, avoidant attachment, and anxious attachment. Secure attachment is comfortable with being dependent on others and vice versa. It is not afraid of abandonment or becoming too close. Avoidant attachment is not comfortable with close relationships and has difficulty trusting and depending on others, tending to keep people at arm's length. Anxious attachment worries that others do not love them or will abandon them. People with this attachment style may scare others away in their desire to become too close (Hazan and Shaver, *Romantic Love* 515).

Attachment to God. Studying faith within the framework of attachment theory is intuitive, considering the concept many people have of God as well as the biblical/historical account of God in the Christian faith. God is known by many as the ideal attachment figure: protective, caring, reliable, and available (Kaufman 67). Biblically, Israel

demonstrates attachment behavior throughout Scripture in their relationship with God, seeking proximity to him as a safe haven as well as a secure base for exploration (Reed 14).

Research backs up the intuitive claim that attachment theory is relevant to faith. Researchers have confirmed that God's image often correlates with primary attachment figures from childhood (Rizzuto; Nelson). Individuals surveyed in additional research predominantly described God in attachment-figure terms, both positive and negative, including: comforting, forgiving, loving, protective, merciful, passive, impersonal, and distant (Spilka, Armatas, and Nussbaum; Gorsuch). Kirkpatrick presents further evidence that God is an attachment-figure as described by Ainsworth, establishing that:

1. People seek proximity to God…
2. as a safe haven in crisis and…
3. as a secure base for exploration; and
4. the threat of separation causes anxiety; and
5. the loss of this relationship would cause grief (Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* 56–72).

Previous Prayer Research

The prayer research reviewed was primarily based on surveys of individuals across the United States regarding prayer habits and correlated with various measures of personal well-being. The largest of these surveys by Poloma and Gallup identified different prayer habits of 1,030 Americans. This research classified prayer into four types that emerged from the data: ritual, conversational, petitionary, and meditative. Ritual prayer is prayer that is recited either by memory or read from a book. Conversational prayer is an "umbrella" term referring to prayer when people use their own words to pray to God, thanking God for blessing or asking for forgiveness and guidance. While it often

includes asking for these things, it does not typically include listening for answers. Petitionary prayer is defined as prayer that asks for material things. Meditative prayer is more passive and focuses on resting in God's presence and listening. It is also the form of prayer that is identified as correlating positively with more aspects of well-being than others (25–40).

Four nearly identical forms of prayer were identified in a report from a smaller survey in which Margaret Poloma was the primary researcher. This article identified that three of the types of prayer impacted well-being, but in different ways. However, petitionary prayer had no statistical impact (Poloma and Pendleton 80–81). These results are not consistent with the hypothesis that participating in intercessory prayer (a type of petition) would impact emerging adults positively. However, others who have reviewed these studies along with subsequent researchers have noted the limitations of reducing the study of prayer to these four types (Williamson 204; Hubert 136; Whittington and Scher 60).

Bramdon L. Whittington and Steven J. Scher researched prayer using six different classifications: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, reception, and obligatory. With the exception of obligatory prayer, these were taken from the Steven P. Laird et al. prayer scale. In this study, adoration, thanksgiving, and reception were the only three types of prayer that correlated positively with general well-being. While these six types of prayer are named differently in the previous research by Poloma and Gallup, they come to a similar conclusion. Prayer that correlates with general well-being tends to be more focused on God and less on self (Whittington and Scher 59).

One reason the prayer intervention that was researched in this study was projected to be beneficial was the unselfish nature of the type of prayer experience being studied. Participants were to praise God and seek his will while interceding for others. Praise included adoration and thanksgiving, both of which were found to correlate positively with well-being by Whittington and Scher. However, supplication and petition were found by all studies to have no impact or even a negative impact on well-being, and the issue thus surfaces as to why intercession would work in the *Practicing Prayer* intervention.

This project may come to different conclusions about intercessory prayer because participants responding in previous surveys may not have had training or a deeper understanding of the heart behind intercessory prayer. Most previous research connecting prayer with well-being was based on surveys given to a population regarding their prayer practices. After analyzing the data correlations between types of prayer and other aspects of life were made. One limitation of this type of research is that types of prayer are categorized based on already existing prayer practices of the respondents. Simply analyzing these responses does not allow for a distinction between petition/supplication that is God-centered and that which is self-centered. This project seeks to measure biblical intercession. Biblical intercession seeks God and is selfless (Helvey 95). It does not have a goal of changing God's mind, but the goal of accomplishing his will (Seok 84). This type of petitionary prayer has not been adequately researched because it does not isolate and measure God-centered intercession. One way this could be accomplished is through pre and post measurements that include intercessory prayer training.

In his research on the impact of intercessory prayer on spiritual growth, Kwang Gun Seok measured spiritual maturity before and after intensive intercessory prayer training. Seok's method of using pre- and post-intervention measurements is similar to that which was used in this research. At the end of 12 weeks of training, Seok concluded that the faith of those trained was "much developed" (AB). While this research is limited in its sample size, it demonstrates an effort to measure the impact of intercessory prayer on the spiritual development of the pray-er and found it to be positive. This work will build on the idea of measuring the impact of prayer on individuals who are specifically seeking God's will while interceding.

Attachment and Prayer

Theologians and social scientists alike use language that clearly links prayer to the attachment relationship. Kirkpatrick holds that the most important attachment behavior people display to maintain proximity to God is prayer (806). Bruce Reed compares prayer to the way a baby cries or calls to a parent (15). Even prior to the development of attachment theory, Heiler uses terms familiar to attachment theorists, writing that prayer comes from the belief that one has a relationship with a God who is close and personal (356). Prayer serves the function of attachment behavior because it seeks proximity to God as a safe haven in crisis or a secure base for exploration (Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* 61–66; Kirkpatrick, "Attachment Theory and Religious Experience" 456–57).

Adults are most likely to experience God as a safe haven when the attachment system is strongly activated. One way attachment to God is activated is when existing

human attachment figures are unavailable (Kirkpatrick, "Attachment Theory and Religious Experience" 456). This makes attachment to God particularly important for emerging adults, considering the attachment relationship they have with their parents is typically in transition as they seek independence. Attachment to God is also activated during stress or crisis when human attachments are inadequate. Gordon W. Allport concluded from his research with combat veterans that war is one of these times. In the face of life's most difficult challenges, the belief in a powerful and present God was most comforting to many of those veterans (Kirkpatrick, "Attachment Theory and Religious Experience" 456; Allport 57).

Less research is available connecting prayer with the function of attachment to God as a secure base, but personal testimony and literature still bear witness to it. One prayer study of particular interest emerged from the *Flame of Love Project.* Without using attachment theory as a specific measure, the *Flame of Love Project* studied this very concept of God as a secure base. Specifically, it studied how experiencing Divine Love moves people to express unconditional love for others (Poloma and Lee 143). In attachment terms, God's Divine Love is a secure base for people to reach out in love to others. Christian hymns as well as contemporary literature is filled with themes emphasizing God as a secure base (Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* 66). David prays in the Psalms that he can "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" and "fear no evil" (Ps. 23:4). The Gospel of Matthew indicates that a wise person builds upon the rock, for it is a secure base (7:24). A final connection linking prayer to the secure base function of attachment draws upon the observation of children with their attachment figures. While exploring, typically young

children occasionally look back to locate their attachment figure as a secure base. This behavior has been labeled *social referencing.* Likewise, prayer might be called *God-referencing* (Kirkpatrick, "Attachment Theory and Religious Experience" 457).

Summary

Knowing that prayer is an attachment behavior provides valuable information when designing a prayer intervention. First, this knowledge creates awareness that prayer has the capacity to hurt as well as harm. Second, remembering that attachment serves as a safe haven and secure base helps to create an intervention that maximizes these functions.

Just as an infant is vulnerable as it reaches for its mother, so is an emerging adult reaching for God. Ainsworth established that for a secure attachment to develop and be nourished between mothers and their infants, the mothers must be perceived to be "reliably sensitive" to their attachment behaviors. Children ask themselves, "Can I count on this person?" If the answer is "yes," the attachment is likely to be *secure*. If it is "no," the attachment is more likely to be *avoidant*. If the response is perceived to be inconsistent, an *anxious* attachment relationship is more likely (Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* 36; Hazan and Shaver, *Attachment as Organizational* 5–6). While God may be perfectly responsive and caring, his *perceived* response is what is critical in the nature of the attachment relationship. The perceived lack of a caring or consistent response from God to prayers may result in anxious or avoidant attachment to God. The reason for this experience of prayer is not because God is not responsive or does not care, but likely because the pray-er does not know what to ask for. For this reason, returning to the essence of prayer, which is connecting with God,

is important. Praise reminds the pray-er of God's nature, which is responsive and loving. Abiding in God requires listening to God's will, and allows the pray-er to confidently intercede. Even when there seems to be no answer, the very process of aligning one's heart with God becomes a building block for secure attachment.

Understanding how the attachment system is activated and the need for a safe haven and secure base during these times might help create an effective prayer intervention relative to attachment to God. To intentionally put emerging adults into crisis situations, with the intention of activating attachment to God as a safe haven, would be unethical. However, true intercession requires the intercessor to make a connection with others who may be in crisis. Therefore, having participants engage in intercession might activate an experience of crisis within themselves on behalf of others requiring them to rely on God as a safe haven. Intercession also activates attachment to God as a secure base, allowing participants to go out into the world with a mission where human intervention is not always enough. Finally, this leads to the importance of prayer as a means of *God-referencing*. This is the act of looking at God and remembering who and where he is to establish a secure base. Praise is a powerful way to reference the secure base of God that is found throughout Scripture, tradition, and experience. For these reasons, this project studied if the proposed prayer intervention focused on the act of being intimate with an intimate and transcendent God through unselfish praise and intercession had an impact on the attachment relationship of emerging adults with God at Indiana Wesleyan University.

Intervention and Research Design

The final section of this chapter reviews the design of this intervention and its methods for assessment. Specifically, it identifies the use of experiential and cooperative learning used as research-based strategies to help emerging adults with motivation and comprehension. Regarding assessment, the triangulation of mixed methods is presented along with reasoning for each type of data collection used.

Intervention: Experiential and Cooperative Learning

Experiential learning. The method of delivery of this intervention was based on Lawrence Kolb's experiential learning theory. At its most basic level, experiential learning is the construction of meaning and knowledge from lived experience (Yardley, Teunissen, and Dornan 161). This means more than just learning by doing. As pictured in Figure 2.1, Kolb's theory establishes a specific cycle of learning that occurs through four modes: 1) concrete experience, 2) reflective observation, 3) abstract conceptualization, and 4) active experimentation (Turesky and Gallagher 6). The purpose of this process is to take the learner through steps that intentionally create meaning from experience.

This intervention used the four modes of experiential learning, engaging participants in experience as well as activities to process their experience. However, the learning concepts were introduced with a different starting point. Rather than beginning with concrete experience, biblical and theoretical concepts of prayer were introduced with abstract conceptualization in whole group teaching (Figure 2.2). Next, groups were given instruction and had the opportunity to practice (active experimentation) at the end of each meeting time. This prepared them for praying throughout the week (concrete

experience). Upon reconvening each week, the groups had time to discuss their experiences with one another (reflective observation) prior to learning the next concept. Thus, with the exception of the first and last meetings, two concepts were covered. Meetings began with reflection of the concept previously taught and experienced prior to beginning a new prayer concept for teaching (Figure 2.3).

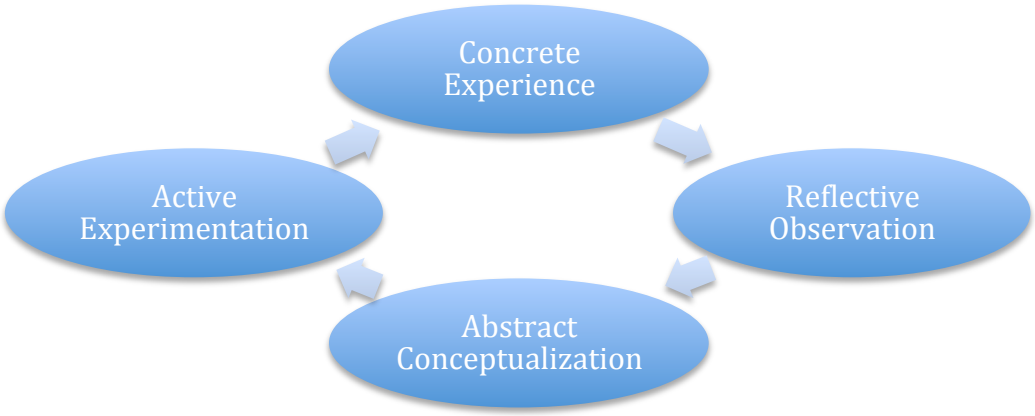


Figure 2.1. Kolb's 4 modes of experiential learning.

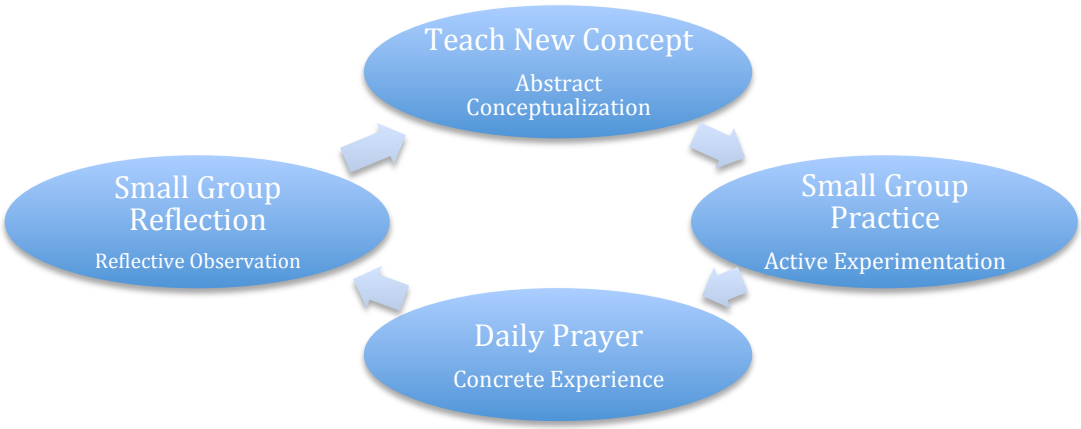


Figure 2.2. Order of modes of learning a new concept in the intervention model.

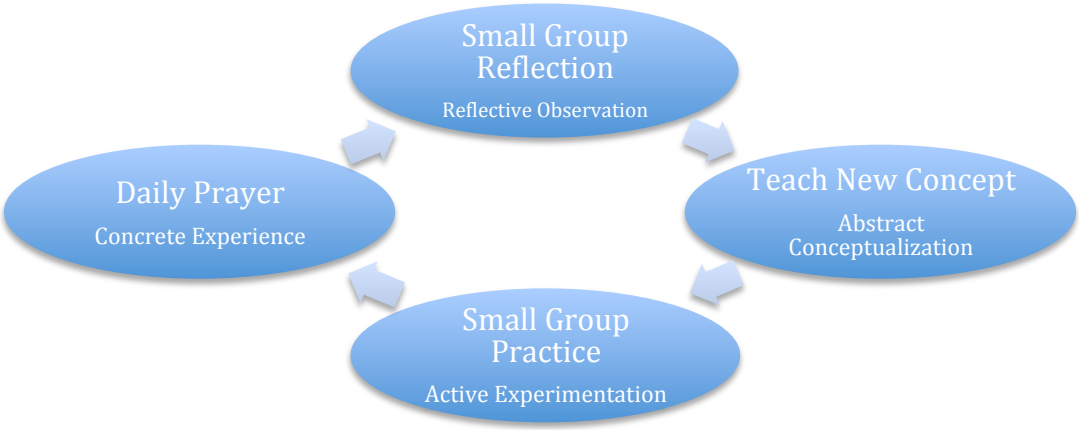


Figure 2.3. Order of group meetings.

Cooperative Learning. This intervention was also structured to maximize the motivational benefit of cooperative learning through small groups. Motivation is particularly important for this intervention to be effective, as it requires participants to pray daily on their own throughout the week. Self-determination theory identifies that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the key factors for intrinsic motivation (Mollica 7–8). If done well, cooperative learning particularly addresses relatedness, while building competence, and not significantly impeding individual autonomy. Researchers Sarah E. Peterson and Jeffrey A. Miller concur with the idea that cooperative learning positively impacts motivation. In a study including 113 undergraduate students, they conclude that:

> cooperative **learning** with undergraduate students can lead to greater cognitive involvement, somewhat greater activation, and higher levels of motivation, including higher engagement, greater perceived importance of the tasks, and more optimal levels of challenge in relation to skill." (Peterson and Miller 132)

This research is important because it demonstrates that all aspects of student motivation are more positive in a cooperative learning environment than in a lecture setting without necessarily sacrificing cognitive understanding.

According to social interdependence theory, the five conditions necessary for cooperative learning are: 1) positive interdependence, 2) individual accountability, 3) promotive interaction, 4) social skills, and 5) group processing (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 23). *Positive interdependence* requires a mutual goal. While groups did not have a formal goal, as members of the body of Christ they mutually share the goal of advancing the Kingdom and therefore were invested in the growth of one another. Members were *accountable* to the group each week as they reported their personal experiences with prayer throughout the week. *Promotive interaction* indicates that members support one

another in the accomplishment of goals. This was done through encouragement in small groups as well as having participants post prayers in a private group throughout the week using social media. This practice served the function of promotive interaction beyond receiving prayer by reminding others to pray. *Social skills* were not explicitly taught, but group norms were established for groups as a guide. These included confidentiality among members, an expectation to participate with respect, and the importance of balanced participation. Group leaders were tasked with helping maintain these norms. *Group processing* refers to reflecting upon how the group functions. Due to the brief nature of this group, this condition was not formally included in the design of this intervention.

Research Design

This research project was designed to explore the impact of participating in regular praise and intercessory prayer on attachment to God, specifically among emerging adult Christians. Impact was measured quantitatively through a previously validated survey instrument and qualitatively by including a short answer response section to the post-intervention survey and conducting focus group interviews. Using multiple (mixed) methods for gathering and interpreting data is referred to as methodological triangulation. The purpose for triangulation is to draw information from multiple sources to gain better perspective and cross-check data that is collected, providing more reliable and richer interpretation (Sensing, chap.3). Each of these methods and the reason for their selection are described briefly below.

Attachment to God was measured quantitatively by using the Attachment to God Scale (Rowatt and Kirkpatrick). This is a research-based nine-item self-reporting survey

that uses a seven-point Likert scale to measure attachment style. This scale was created due to concerns that previous measures may not have accounted for the impact of certain theological inclinations of respondents as well as the social desirability of certain answers. This was a particularly important concern for this research, being completed at a Christian university where there may be an increased impact of these two factors. This instrument was also selected for its brevity, allowing it to be integrated as part of the first and last sessions of the intervention.

Qualitative data tends to be more exploratory than quantitative, providing the researcher with information about underlying reasons and providing opportunity for new ideas to come forth. Qualitative data was collected in the post-intervention survey by asking participants an open-ended question about perceived strengths and weaknesses of the intervention. Open-ended questions such as this one provide richer data than quantitative methods because they have a greater capacity to challenge assumptions of the researcher by allowing respondents the freedom to use their own vocabulary (Gibson 236, 241).

The use of semi-structured focus group interviews was a second means to gather qualitative data. Focus groups have the specific advantage of using the synergy of multiple people, allowing one comment to build upon the next (Sensing 120). These interviews took place one to two weeks following the intervention, using the responses from the survey to guide questions that were asked. Sensing advocates combining interviews with surveys. These methods work well together because surveys often provide information that would not be revealed in interviews, and interviews give

respondents an opportunity to clarify and expand upon answers discovered in the surveys that are of particular interest (chap.4).

Summary of the Literature

This chapter reviewed literature in five different areas relevant to this research. First, it reviewed the Biblical foundations and theological foundations of prayer. Next, it reviewed literature on emerging adulthood, followed by previous research on prayer and the development of attachment to God theory. Finally, implementation methods were reviewed to develop an effective intervention and the best way to research its impact.

The biblical foundations of prayer indicate that the primary biblical function of prayer is connection with God and his will. Praise and thanksgiving focus attention on God's goodness, building relationship and heart knowledge. Petitioning anything we desire according to God's will both requires and allows Creator and Creation to advance the Kingdom together. This can only be accomplished with a humble heart that abides in God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Once abiding in this intimacy, a believer can ask for anything and receive it knowing that it is according to the will of the Father. As the Father provides, the bond between the two is reinforced as they advance the Kingdom together.

Theology directly impacts prayer and prayer impacts theology. Prayer is the means to directly communicate with God influencing the theology of the pray-er with first-hand experience about God's nature. Likewise, one's theology influences the prayer itself. The works of many theologians were reviewed, each providing insight to help that led to four truths about God and/or prayer to help theology guide prayer. First, God is

sovereign, requiring that his subjects come boldly and humbly before him as Creator and King with the knowledge that he is capable of answering their prayers. Second, God's will is best. Therefore, believers must submit their will to his and abide in him, listening to the Holy Spirit in order to pray according to his will. Third, God listens and cares, so pray-ers must authentically share their hearts with him and not hide their true feelings. Finally, God is moved by prayer. This makes it necessary for his children to pray, for the world awaits his Kingdom and the prayers of righteous people can help bring that about.

Emerging adulthood is the stage of life when people are no longer legally accountable to their parents, but have yet to take on the typical responsibilities associated with adulthood. It is an age of instability, possibilities, identity-exploration, and self-focus. This preoccupation with self, combined with a consumer-driven society and church, has resulted in many emerging adults embracing moralistic therapeutic deism. MTD is an approach to faith that rejects basic orthodox doctrines, is focused on personal needs, requires little personal sacrifice, and resists outside authority. Setran and Kiesling offer an approach to the spiritual formation of emerging adults calling them to move beyond *moralism* by reshaping their loves, move beyond *therapy* by living sacrificially for the glory of God, and move beyond *deism* by practicing the presence of God (30–53). Moving beyond moralism, therapy, and deism was reviewed; including how this might be accomplished by intimately communing with the immanent and transcendent God through prayer.

Prayer is an attachment behavior. Just as an infant is vulnerable as it reaches for its mother, so is an emerging adult that reaches for God. A secure attachment relationship views the caregiver as a safe haven and secure base. Therefore, God's perceived response

to prayer must seem reliable and sensitive for a secure attachment to develop. Praise is a means of God-referencing, remembering who and where God is to establish him as a safe haven and secure base. Intercession establishes God as a secure base by providing the pray-er the opportunity to serve the world in prayer. While interceding, they enter into crisis situations on behalf of others, experiencing God as a safe haven. Regardless of the outcome of prayers, they are an attachment behavior that can establish God as consistent and sensitive if the pray-er remembers that the purpose of prayer is to connect with God and align with his will.

The final section of this chapter reviews the design of this intervention and its methods for assessment. Specifically, it identifies the use of experiential and cooperative learning used as research-based strategies to help emerging adults with motivation and comprehension. Experiential learning involves four modes included in the intervention model intended to create meaning from experience. These modes are: 1) concrete experience, 2) reflective observation, 3) abstract conceptualization, and 4) active experimentation (Turesky and Gallagher 6). Cooperative learning theory was integrated into the design of the intervention with the use of small groups to maximize the motivation for students to participate.

The research was designed to explore the impact of praise and intercessory prayer on attachment to God, using multiple (mixed) methods. Attachment to God was measured quantitatively by using the Attachment to God Scale as a part of the pre- and post-surveys (Rowatt and Kirkpatrick). Additional questions to PS2 provided more quantitative data regarding the overall impact of the intervention and qualitative data regarding strengths

and weaknesses. Focus groups added a final layer of data to provide richer and more reliable results.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this project. It begins with a review of the nature and purpose of the project followed by the specific research questions employed and how they were addressed. The ministry context of this project is then described, followed by a description of the participants including the criteria used for their selection. Next, ethical considerations are addressed and data collection instrumentation is closely evaluated along with project design to determine reliability and validity. The project is then broken down into steps, including when and how data was collected and steps for implementing the intervention itself. The chapter concludes with a brief explanation of how data was analyzed.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the research was to develop and evaluate the impact of a 4-week prayer intervention for students at Indiana Wesleyan University; the intervention focused on looking outside of one's self by connecting with both the transcendent and immanent God of the Bible and the needs of others through the discipline of prayer. This intervention was designed with the understanding that to love God and to love others is the primary task of a Christian, and it called participants to practice that task in daily prayer. The intervention was designed by drawing upon concepts from cooperative and experiential learning theories, as well as biblical content regarding the nature of God and connecting with him through praise and intercession.

This research is important to the practice of ministry because the church must find effective ways to fight moralistic therapeutic deism and re-establish meaningful relationships between emerging adults and their Father in heaven. U.S.-based Christians live in an increasingly individualistic and consumer-driven world that influences the personal faith of emerging adults. Clinging to their new found independence, many emerging adults have replaced a biblical vision of God with a less demanding and more convenient God who exists merely to meet personal needs and provide comfort in times of sorrow. Unfortunately, this vision undermines the very nature of God as well as the ability for individuals to connect with him as an attachment figure. For this reason, the measure being used to determine the effectiveness of the intervention is attachment to God.

Research Questions

RQ #1: How avoidant/anxious/secure is the style of attachment to God of students at Indiana Wesleyan University prior to the 4-week prayer intervention? Fulfilling the purpose of this project necessitated determining the impact of the intervention as it related to participants' attachment to God. This research question establishes the necessary baseline data for measuring that impact, and is addressed in the Pre-intervention Attachment to God Survey (PS1). This survey uses a 7-point Likert scale, quantitatively measuring avoidant attachment (items 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9) and anxious attachment (items 3, 5, 8). Items 1, 4, and 6 are reverse scored and the mean is calculated for each dimension. Higher scores indicate more avoidance or anxiety, while lower scores indicate a more secure attachment to God.

RQ #2: How avoidant/anxious/secure is the style of attachment to God of students at Indiana Wesleyan University following the 4-week prayer intervention? Determining the impact of the intervention likewise necessitated the collection of data from participants following the intervention. The Post-intervention Attachment to God Survey (PS2) was used for this purpose. This survey measured avoidant and anxious attachment to God in a manner identical to PS1. Measuring impact also requires some form of assessment following the intervention.

RQ #3: What were the perceived strengths and weaknesses of this intervention? The purpose of the research was not only to determine the impact of the intervention, but also to identify its strengths and weaknesses to provide guidance in future ministry settings. Qualitative assessments, including focus groups and questions #3 and #4 in section B of PS2, were the primary means of data collection used to answer this question. Questions #3 and #4 (section B) in PS2 asked about perceived strengths and weaknesses of the intervention. Two focus groups were convened three-four weeks following the intervention to collect data regarding what aspects of the intervention were most helpful from a qualitative perspective not immediately following the intervention.

Table 3.1. Data Collection Instruments

Research Question	Corresponding Data Collection Instruments
RQ1: How avoidant/anxious/secure is the style of attachment to God of students at Indiana Wesleyan University prior to the 4-week prayer intervention?	*Pre-Attachment to God Survey (PS1)*
RQ2: How avoidant/anxious/secure is the style of attachment to God of students at Indiana Wesleyan University following the 4-week prayer intervention?	*Post-Attachment to God Survey (PS2)*
RQ3: What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of this intervention?	*PS2 (question #3&#4, section B) Focus Groups*

Ministry Context(s)

Indiana Wesleyan University is a Wesleyan school in the heart of the Midwest that emphasizes spiritual formation, including mandatory chapel attendance. It recruits from and serves the Wesleyan denomination, which holds a fairly conservative Biblical worldview. A high percentage of the faculty and students attending the school are Caucasian.

Participants

Participants in the intervention consisted of residence hall chaplains at Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU) and volunteers from the student body. Volunteers were either personally invited or responded to public announcements given during chapel services and posted in residence halls.

Criteria for Selection

Participants were limited to undergraduate Christian students between 18-29 years old at IWU. This group was selected for two reasons. First, this group meets the specifications of the target population to be measured. Second, IWU was selected because of a personal connection with the student body chaplain, who helped attain permission for this research at the university.

Two types of participants were included in the intervention and research. Because the intervention was adopted by IWU as an aspect of the chaplain program, residence hall chaplains were required to participate in the intervention as employees of the university. However, for ethical considerations, they were given the option to participate or not in the research, if they did not want to take the surveys or be included in focus groups. The second type of participant volunteered from the student body. All of these participants agreed to participation in the research as part of the intervention.

To assure that the intervention was available to all students desiring to participate, the size of the intervention population was not limited. Surveys were given to all research participants, but a smaller sample was selected to participate in focus groups. Sixteen students were purposively selected and invited to participate in two focus groups to collect richer qualitative data. One group consisted of residence hall chaplains, while the other consisted of volunteers from the rest of the student body. These groups were separated due to the potential impact the presence of chaplains might have on the response of others. Both groups were created with the intention of gathering information from the broadest cross-section of the population possible. Gender, ethnicity, age, and

faith background were all considered in this process. Those who indicated less than 80% participation in the intervention were not considered for focus groups.

Description of Participants

Participants were students at Indiana Wesleyan University who willingly sought to participate in this prayer intervention, or who were residence hall chaplains. They ranged from ages 18-24 years old and consisted of both males and females. The participants were predominately Caucasian.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical research ensures that participants provide informed consent. This consent was given as part of the online Attachment to God Survey. Potential participants were asked to read the Informed Consent Letter (Appendix A) included in the survey and to answer "yes" weif they agreed to the terms of the letter and were giving consent. Residence hall chaplains, that were required to participate in the intervention as part of their job responsibilities, were not required to participate in the research.

Confidentiality is another critical ethical consideration when conducting human research. Survey information was kept confidential by using the online survey tool, Survey Monkey. A second step to ensure survey confidentiality was having respondents use personal codes for PS1 and PS2 known only to them for identification. Participation in focus groups was kept confidential by contacting focus group participants from a pool of those giving consent to participate through a means of communication chosen by the volunteer (phone, text, e-mail, or privately in person by the researcher or a student body chaplain. The only individuals with access to the data collected from these groups were members of the

research team, including: 1) the researcher, 2) student body chaplains, and 3) a transcriptionist. All members of the research team signed confidentiality agreements promising not to reveal the identities of research subjects (Appendix A). All data was collected and kept secure on password-protected computers by student body chaplains, who conducted the focus groups, and collected in person by the researcher. Once data was successfully transferred to the researcher, it was permanently deleted from other devices. Data from surveys and focus groups was stored on a personal computer with password protection only accessible to the researcher. A copy of the video recording was given to the transcriptionist who kept this information on a password-protected computer. All research data was permanently deleted upon completion and approval of the dissertation.

Instrumentation

Three data collection instruments determined if the intervention impacted participant's attachment to God. These included a Pre-Attachment to God Survey, a Post-Attachment to God Survey, and focus groups. Quantitative data was primarily gathered with standardized instruments, while qualitative data was gathered using researcher-designed instruments.

The Pre-Attachment to God Survey (PS1) was administered online at the beginning of the opening meeting of the intervention after a brief explanation of the intervention and the research connected with it. The instrument consisted of an informed consent page, the 9-item Attachment to God Scale, and two demographic questions. The 9-item Attachment to God Scale is a standardized assessment including nine statements about how one experiences God (Rowatt and Kirkpatrick). Respondents indicate their

level of agreement or disagreement with each of these statements on a 7-point Likert scale (Appendix B). The purpose of this instrument was to measure each participant's attachment to God prior to the intervention, providing baseline data from which growth could be measured. Demographic questions added by the researcher identified participants by age and gender. Demographic questions were included for the purpose of analyzing the effectiveness of the intervention with different groups of people, providing a better understanding of the generalizability of the study.

The Post-Attachment to God Survey (PS2) was administered online at the conclusion of the final session of the intervention. It included the same standardized 9-item scale as PS1, followed by a short researcher-designed section focusing on the intervention itself (Appendix B). The purpose of the standardized section was to provide the quantitative data necessary for measuring impact by comparing the results of PS2 with PS1. The researcher-designed section included two questions related to level of participation in the intervention to determine if this corresponded with other findings. The third and fourth questions asked for perceived strengths and weaknesses of the intervention. The purpose of collecting this qualitative data was to learn about the intervention itself and how participants experienced it. The final question asked respondents to select the answer that most accurately describes their relationship with God since the beginning of the intervention, indicating; a) worse, b) same, c) better, d) significantly better. This was included to provide a quantitative measure of the participants' perceived benefit from the intervention.

Interviewing two focus groups three-four weeks following the intervention was the final method of data collection used in this project. The questions and protocols of

this instrument were developed by the researcher, shaped by process of expert review, and moderated by student body chaplains (Appendix B). The purpose of gathering data at this time was intentional. It allowed participants a period of time to reflect and measure change after a greater length of time had elapsed, rather than immediately following the intervention. It also was out of consideration for students due to the school calendar. Group A consisted of residence hall chaplains that were required by the chaplain department to participate in the intervention (although not required to participate in the focus group). Group B consisted of others in the student body volunteering to participate. These focus groups collected qualitative data through open-ended questions about the process and content of the intervention. The first four questions addressed the benefit of the four specific learning elements used in the intervention. These elements were: 1) small group reflection, 2) direct instruction, 3) interactive learning activities, and 4) daily practice of the prayer discipline covered that week. When appropriate, moderators followed up with a content question allowing the group to respond about specific lessons or activities. Each of these questions concluded with the respondents indicating on a 1-4 scale the value of that particular element. These questions provided a better understanding of what specific aspects of the intervention were most and least helpful. The fifth and final question asked whether the intervention had impacted the participant's relationship with God and, if so, how. This question drew out more qualitative data about the effectiveness of the intervention as a whole in relationship to attachment to God. It was designed to give the researcher the opportunity to understand how participants experienced the intervention in their own words with the possibility of discovering themes previously not considered. While moderators were trained to follow a strict

protocol, refreshments were provided to encourage volunteers and create an environment more conducive to open conversation.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

Surveys and focus groups, the two methods of data collection in the project design, determined the impact of the intervention on participants' attachment to God. To ensure reliability and validity, these instruments were either standardized or subjected to expert review. Administration of these instruments was also considered by establishing protocols that maximized the number of participants as well as the reliability and validity of their answers.

Pre- and post-intervention surveys were administered as part of the project design. Both PS1 and PS2 included the 9-item Attachment to God Scale to quantitatively measure the impact of the intervention. Wade C. Rowatt and Lee A. Kirkpatrick created this scale to be a more reliable measurement of attachment to God than previous measures by accounting for religiosity and socially desirable answers (Rowatt and Kirkpatrick 637)). PS1 included expert-reviewed questions to collect data regarding age, gender, and faith background of participants. PS2 included two researcher-designed (expert-reviewed) questions regarding strengths and weaknesses of the intervention itself, and one multiple-choice question asking participants to indicate how the intervention impacted their relationship with God (worse, same, better, significantly better). These questions were included in the survey to gather quantitative and qualitative data about the intervention from the broadest possible sample. The surveys were administered during the first and last meetings of the intervention to maximize response rate and eliminate outside variables occurring before or after the intervention that might impact participants'

responses.

Focus groups were included as part of the project design to gather more in-depth data regarding specific elements of the intervention and to increase reliability through mixed method data collection. Two groups of 6-8 participants were selected to participate three-four weeks following the intervention. This time frame was chosen because mid-term exams and spring break immediately followed the intervention. Conducting focus groups during these weeks might have impacted reliability due to distraction or stress. Residence hall chaplains were in a separate focus group to eliminate the possibility of their position influencing the responses of others participating. Moderators were trained and followed specific protocols. They were to ask only specified questions and instructed not to add additional comments or questions other than to ask a participant to clarify or expand upon an answer. Questions 1-4 directed the group to address specific components of the intervention (both process and content) as designed based on the literature review. Data was analyzed based on these predetermined themes. To ensure validity regarding these specifics, focus group members needed to have participated in at least 80% of the intervention itself. Question 5 asks if (and how) the intervention has impacted their participants' relationship with God. This question provides further reliability regarding overall impact on attachment to God through the triangulation of mixed methods data.

Data Collection

The research project design is intervention research, requiring data to be collected prior to and following the proposed intervention to measure impact. This section provides the content and implementation steps of the intervention as well as the measurement

tools. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to create a mixed methods research model. However, first, the intervention will be discussed in detail.

Intervention. The intervention was developed based on the literature review, with the permission and final approval of the Dean of Chapel at IWU, and in consultation with the student body chaplain. This process was followed to honor proper lines of authority and draw from the first-hand expertise of a student at IWU. Both of these were important steps to create an intervention compatible with the theology the school and relevant to IWU students.

The intervention included five 75-minute sessions spanning a four-week time period, with one session each week (including one at the beginning and end of this time). Lessons were designed to be 60 minutes with 15 additional minutes built in to honor time. While the researcher believed more sessions would have been ideal to deliver the desired content, it was determined that it would be difficult to get a longer commitment from college students. To maximize participation and avoid conflicts with other initiatives, dates for the intervention were selected in consultation with the Dean of Chapel and the student body chaplain. It was decided that the intervention would take place at 6:30 on Sunday evenings, beginning a few weeks following winter break and completing before mid-term exams. This maximized the opportunity for promotion to the student body, avoided long weekends embedded in the school calendar, and allowed students to participate with the least anticipated academic stress.

Participants were gathered in various ways. Prior to school starting, the residence hall chaplains were informed that prayer was to be a primary focus of their ministry. As

part of that emphasis, they would be participating in and inviting others to participate in this intervention. Upon return from winter break, public invitations to the student body included a slide advertising the intervention on a video feed in common areas of campus and an announcement in chapel service.

Each learning concept was divided into four elements patterned after the four elements of active learning and using concepts from cooperative learning theory reviewed in Chapter 2. Each session included three segments with the fourth element completed by participants between sessions. These elements specifically included: 1) direct instruction of a new concept, 2) a group activity to gain competence, 3) concrete experience of practicing prayer throughout the week, and 4) group reflection on the previous week's experience. While the learning that occurred during sessions was important, experiential learning theory places one's own experience at the center of learning (Peterson, DeCato, and Kolb 229). The experience designed to be at the center of learning during this intervention was the regular practice of prayer throughout the week.

Slight modifications were necessary during the first and last sessions of the intervention. The first session was scheduled for 90 minutes to provide extra time needed to administer PS1, and substituted the time for reflection with an introduction to the entire process. The final session replaced the teaching of a new concept and group activity with a final debriefing and administration of PS2.

The content of the intervention was based on the literature review of the purpose of prayer and emerging adulthood, including moralistic therapeutic deism. This review led to the development of an intervention designed to help emerging adults draw closer to

God by taking the focus of faith off of self through the practice of praise (loving God) and intercession (loving others). An outline of the ministry intervention sessions can be found in Appendix C.

Research methods. The research employed the use of mixed method data collection for two primary reasons. First, the use of mixed methods increases reliability by giving the researcher an opportunity to cross check the data collected and examine the consistency of results amongst all the sources available (Sensing, chap.3). The second reason for using mixed methods is to provide a multi-dimensional picture that is lacking from collecting data from only one type of instrument. The instruments used in this research included a Pre-Attachment to God Survey, a Post-Attachment to God Survey, and two focus groups.

The Pre-Attachment to God Survey (PS1) was a quantitative tool administered to gain informed consent, collect demographic information, and establish baseline data from participants from which overall impact of the intervention could be measured. Quantitative instruments collect data that is measurable by numbers. This type of data is meaningful because it eliminates language, used by respondents, that requires interpretation. However, it does require respondents to interpret the language used in the instrument. For this reason, the use of tools that are valid and reliable is important. In this case, attachment to God was measured by using the 9-item Attachment to God Scale, which was previously designed and standardized by experts in the psychology of religion (Rowatt and Kirkpatrick).

The PS1 was administered after giving a brief introduction of the research and intervention during the first session of the intervention. PS1 was administered at this time to collect the maximum number of responses prior to starting the intervention. Administering PS1 at this time also provided the most accurate information about the participants' attachment to God immediately prior to the intervention. Use of the online survey tool, Survey Monkey, ensured confidentiality and facilitated ease of use for the respondents and researcher. Respondents created a personal code to be used for PS1 and PS2 as another step to ensure confidentiality. Paper copies were made available for those unable to access Survey Monkey through personal devices of their own.

The Post-Attachment to God Survey (PS2) used the same quantitative scale as PS1, with the addition of questions regarding their level of participation in the intervention and two qualitative questions asking what was most or least helpful about the intervention itself. The quantitative answers were used alongside PS1 to measure overall impact. Questions regarding level of participation were included to evaluate how the level of participation may have influenced the impact of the intervention. The final qualitative questions included were designed to help determine the reliability of the quantitative data and collect information about the intervention itself. These open-ended questions gathered richer data from responses given in the participants' own words. For similar reasons as noted above for the PS1, time was allotted in the final session of the intervention to administer the PS2 online using Survey Monkey.

Interviews with focus groups gathered additional qualitative data about specific aspects of the intervention. Qualitative data helps develop new insights and constructs themes to explain what is being studied. Methods used to collect qualitative data "are

interpretive and focus on meaning" (J. Smith et al. 41). This type of research often requires imaginative and creative approaches to produce meaningful data that do not always follow previously established step-by-step rules (Gough and Lyons 239). Researcher Jonathan Smith agrees, noting that context often dictates different methods. He writes, "One cannot do good qualitative research by following a cookbook" (40). While one cookbook may not be relevant for all qualitative research, a "recipe" informed by best practices, must be created by the researcher that can be followed. This project conducted focus groups because they have the unique advantage of using the synergy created in a group setting to inspire thoughts previously not considered (Sensing chap.4).

Sixteen participants were selected from a pool of volunteers indicating their willingness to participate at the final session of the intervention. Those participating in less than 80% of the intervention were removed from consideration. From the remaining pool of volunteers, two groups of 8 were invited to participate. Attendance to these groups was a challenge. Focus Group A (FGA) consisted of four residence hall chaplains, while Focus Group B (FGB) consisted one non-residence hall chaplain (making this an interview in practical terms). These groups were separated to eliminate the possible influence that the presence of residence hall chaplains might have on the responses of others. Research indicates that focus groups are most effective when comprised of members who are strangers (Sensing, chap.4). While creating this environment could not be entirely achieved, group participants were selected from different residence halls as much as possible. The final consideration in the selection of participants was creating a balance between males and females. To avoid possible bias in the selection process that might come from previous knowledge about participants, the researcher selected

participants without consulting members of the IWU research team. Participants were invited within one week of the conclusion of the intervention by e-mail to a group that would meet on a specific date in three weeks (following their spring break). They were asked to RSVP to confirm their ability to participate or not and were sent an e-mail reminder two days prior to the meeting if they responded in the affirmative. Additional participants were not invited to replace those who could not attend.

Trained student body chaplains conducted the focus groups according to set protocols. The purpose for this was to reduce the pressure participants might experience to respond positively with the researcher (and presenter of material) in the room. Refreshments were provided to provide a relaxed atmosphere, but protocols were set to gather very specific information about the intervention. Moderators kept discussion focused on five (multi-part) questions and limited the group interview to 90 minutes in total. They spent no more than 20 minutes on any of the first four questions, making sure to leave 30 minutes for participants to respond to the final question if needed.

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed independently and used in combination to help determine reliability and provide a richer picture by reporting results from multiple angles. Quantitative data from PS1 and PS2 was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data found in PS2 and from focus groups was analyzed by thematic and narrative analysis.

Quantitative data taken from PS1 and PS2 was analyzed using two methods seeking answers to four questions. Paired sample t-tests were used to determine the impact and significance of the intervention on the whole group by comparing results

before and after the intervention. Mean scores were calculated from the attachment to God items, scored on a 7-item Likert scale in both PS1 and PS2 and compared in three ways. First, the aggregate scores were compared. Next, the two dimensions of attachment were measured independently by isolating the questions related to avoidant and those related to anxious attachment as indicated in the literature review. Regression analysis was then used to determine what factors might have impacted results. Factors analyzed included demographic questions found in PS1 and level of participation questions found in PS2.

Transcripts from questions three and four in PS2 were analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses of the intervention. The data was analyzed by the researcher and by student body chaplains independently to determine reliable themes. Data points were identified from the transcripts, then categorized and labeled under each theme.

Focus group data was analyzed by categorizing data in themes as well. However, the themes from the first four questions were predetermined by the question itself. Specifically, these questions asked about specific elements in the intervention and followed up with a content question. Data from the final focus group question asking participants to discuss the overall impact of the intervention was analyzed in a similar fashion to PS2. Transcripts from this question were analyzed by the researcher as well as student body chaplains to determine reliable themes for the data to be held. Quantitative data from these groups was analyzed to understand the overall perceived helpfulness of the intervention as well as each independent element asked about during focus groups. Mean scores were analyzed to confirm the reliability of qualitative analysis of results found in PS2 and focus groups.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Many emerging adults identify themselves as Christians, but seem to lack a secure and transformative relationship with the Lord who is both universally sovereign (transcendent) and personally intimate (immanent). Many have settled for the convenience of a god of their own creation who is not personal and/or powerful. They desire experiences that stir the heart, but are unwilling to submit to the Lord who wants to change it. Other emerging adults maintain orthodox Christian beliefs but lack a transformative relationship with God because they compartmentalize their faith, not allowing it to impact their daily living. Both approaches to faith undermine a secure attachment relationship to the one true living God.

The purpose of this project was to create an intervention that would actively engage emerging adults at Indiana Wesleyan University in prayer over a four-week period, and measure the effectiveness of the intervention using attachment to God theory. The quantitative data measuring attachment to God in this chapter is taken from pre/post tests that incorporated the "Attachment to God Scale," developed by Rowatt and Kirkpatrick. Qualitative data analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention was gathered from additional post-test responses along with focus group discussion. Quantitative and qualitative data regarding perceived strengths and weaknesses of the intervention was collected from PS2 and from focus group discussion. This chapter concludes with a summary of the major findings discovered through data analysis.

Participants

The *Practicing Prayer* intervention was open to all students at Indiana Wesleyan University. An invitation was made to the student body during chapel one week prior to the intervention and through the chapel instagram page. Residence hall chaplains made personal invitations to their residents. Residence hall chaplains were required to participate in the intervention. However, no participants in the intervention (including chaplains) were required to participate in the research. In all, 65 students completed PS1 at the first meeting. Attendance dropped in following weeks to approximately 40 students per week. Of the 65 participants, 27 completed both PS1 and PS2. All data represented in graphs and charts created from PS1 and PS2 reflect this sample (n=27).

Participants in the research were classified by gender and by academic status (class). Due to the significantly racially homogeneous population at Indiana Wesleyan University, information regarding race was not included when collecting demographic information to protect the identity of minority participants. While no formal count was taken, participants in the intervention closely reflected the predominantly Caucasian campus. Of the original 65 participants, 38 were female (58%). However, of the 27 research participants studied, 13 were female (48%). Regarding class, initial participation was very balanced with 49% of participants being underclassmen. However, the retention of these students was lower, resulting in 37% of the research participants being composed of Freshmen and Sophomores. The breakdown of research participants (those completing both PS1 and PS2) can be seen in Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

Figure 4.1. Gender

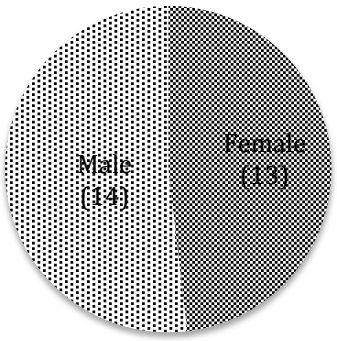
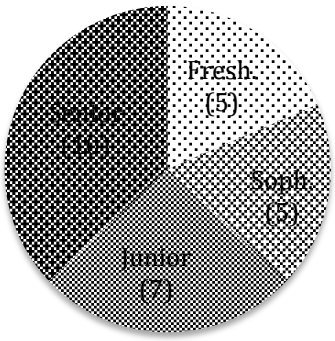
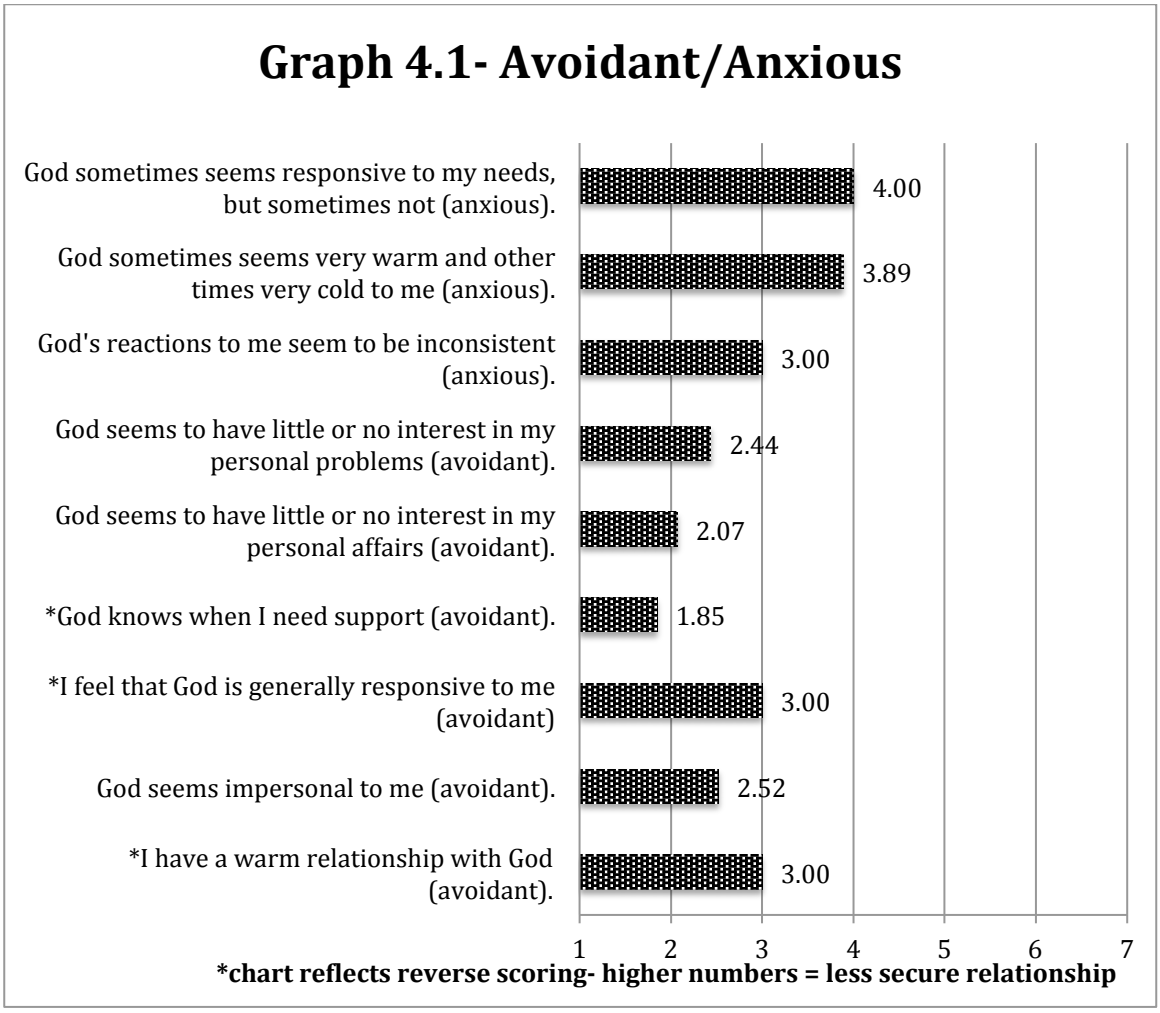


Figure 4.2. Class



Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

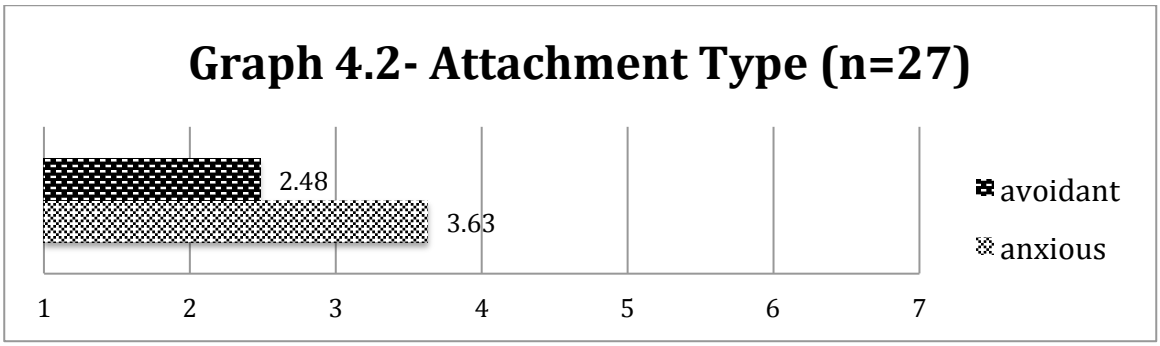
The first research question was designed to establish a baseline reflecting how anxious/avoidant/secure participant's attachment to God was prior to the *Practicing Prayer* intervention. Attachment to God was quantitatively assessed by analyzing data from the 9-item Attachment to God Scale included in PS1. This instrument includes three statements describing an anxious relationship with God, three statements describing an avoidant relationship with God, and three statements describing a secure relationship with God. Respondents indicate on a 7-point Likert Scale how much they agree or disagree with each statement (7=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree). Items reflecting a secure relationship with God were reverse scored and classified as avoidant type, resulting in 6 statements measuring how avoidant the relationship with God is (1,2,4,6,7,8), and 3 statements measuring how anxious it is (3,5,9).



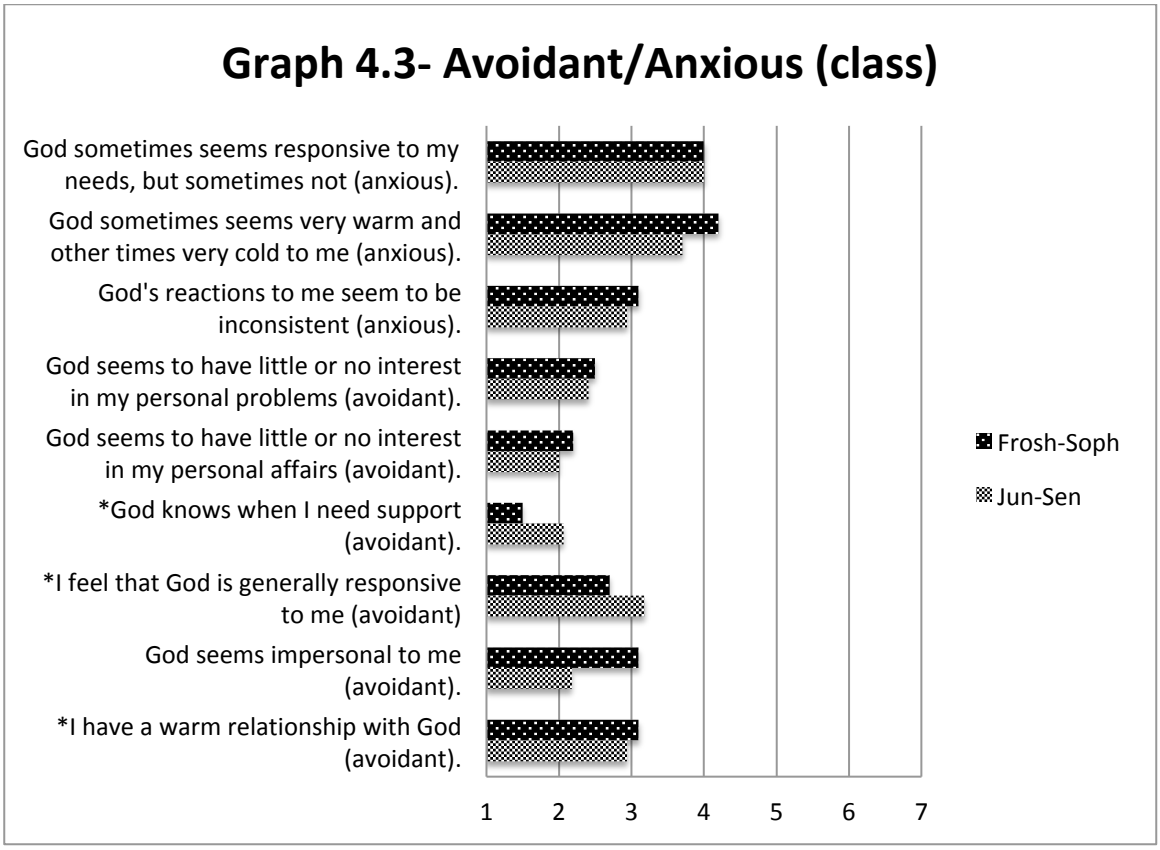
Participants tended to agree more strongly with statements reflecting an anxious relationship with God, compared to statements reflecting an avoidant one. Anxious statements describe God as being inconsistent, while avoidant statements reflect that God is more distant. The mean average of the mean scores of statements classified as anxious was 3.63, compared to a 2.48 mean average of statements classified as avoidant (Graph 4.2). The data collected from all PS1 respondents supports this tendency, indicating an average anxious-type relationship score of 3.59, compared to a score of 2.33 on statements indicating avoidant-type relationship with God (N=65). Below are the two

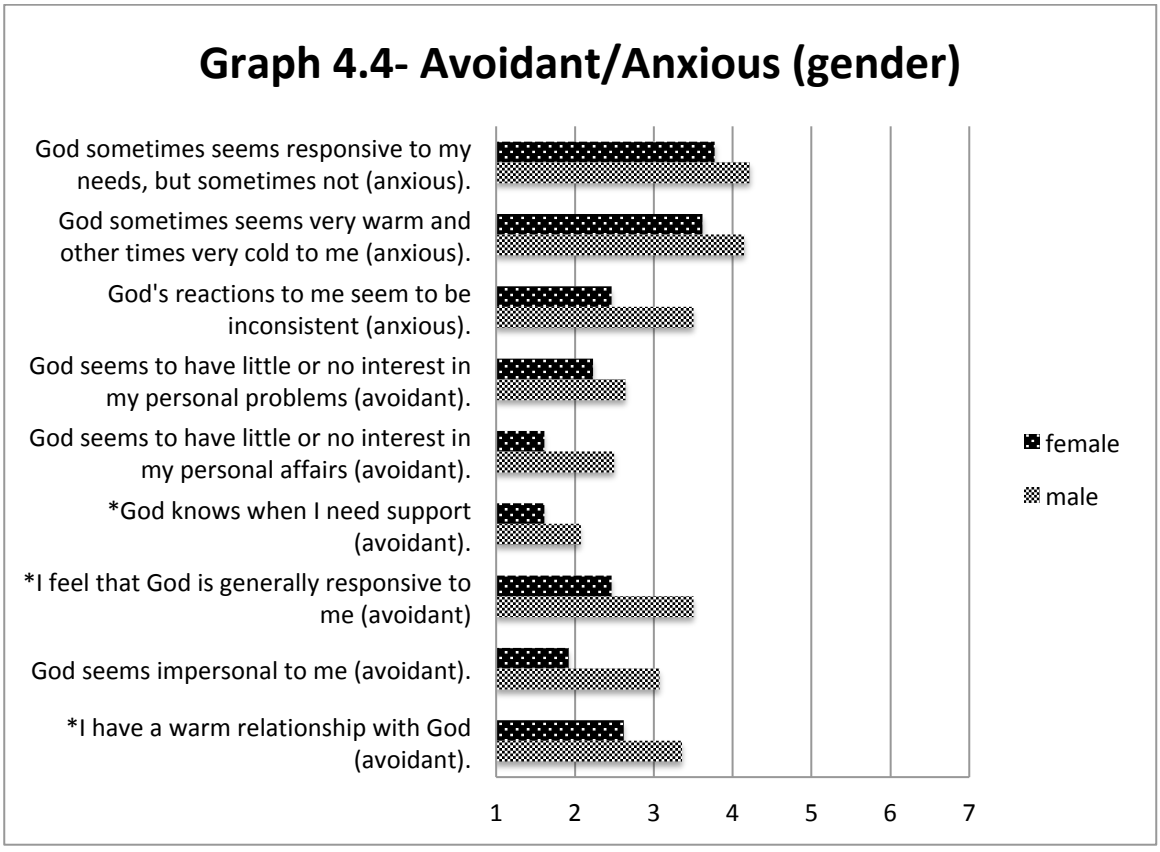
anxious statements most strongly agreed with in PS1 by the 27 participants responding to both PS1 and PS2.

- "God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not." (4.00)
- "God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me." (3.89)



Data was segregated and analyzed based on gender and enrollment status by class. Responses were very similar across different classes, from Freshmen to Seniors. However, the mean average of male responses on every question was higher (more avoidant/anxious) than female responses. While an interesting observation, this correlation was not further analyzed for significance because it is beyond the scope of the project. The following graphs break down responses to the Attachment to God Scale by class (Graph 4.3) and by gender (Graph 4.4). Classes were grouped into underclassmen and upperclassmen to keep the sample size for each group at 10 or above


Graph 4.3- Avoidant/Anxious (class)
God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not (anxious).
God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me (anxious).
God's reactions to me seem to be inconsistent (anxious).
God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems (avoidant).
God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs (avoidant).
*God knows when I need support (avoidant).
*I feel that God is generally responsive to me (avoidant)
God seems impersonal to me (avoidant).
*I have a warm relationship with God (avoidant).
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Frosh-Soph
Jun-Sen


Graph 4.4- Avoidant/Anxious (gender)
God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not (anxious).
God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me (anxious).
God's reactions to me seem to be inconsistent (anxious).
God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems (avoidant).
God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs (avoidant).
*God knows when I need support (avoidant).
*I feel that God is generally responsive to me (avoidant)
God seems impersonal to me (avoidant).
*I have a warm relationship with God (avoidant).
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
female
male

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

The second research question was designed to establish how secure of an attachment participants had with God following the *Practicing Prayer* intervention for the purpose of evaluating the impact of the intervention. This was quantitatively measured in PS2 using the same Attachment to God Scale as in PS1. For an additional quantitative data point, a forced choice response question was included in PS2 asking participants to describe their relationship with God following the intervention compared to beforehand. A small sample of qualitative data was collected through a focus group question describing impact of the intervention.

Analysis of the data from the Attachment to God Scale found in PS2 indicates a significant difference in participants' attachment to God following the *Practicing Prayer* intervention compared to their attachment to God prior to the intervention. Of the nine statements in PS2, the average answer in eight cases indicated a less avoidant or anxious relationship with God than in PS1. The only exception was a slight tendency (statistically not significant) for participants to disagree more with the statement "God knows when I need support." Six of the nine responses demonstrated a significant difference in one-tailed t-tests where $p <. 05$, five where $p < .01$, and two where $p < .001$. This difference was evenly distributed between anxious and avoidant attachment statements with two-thirds of each type of statement showing statistically significant difference (Table 4.1).

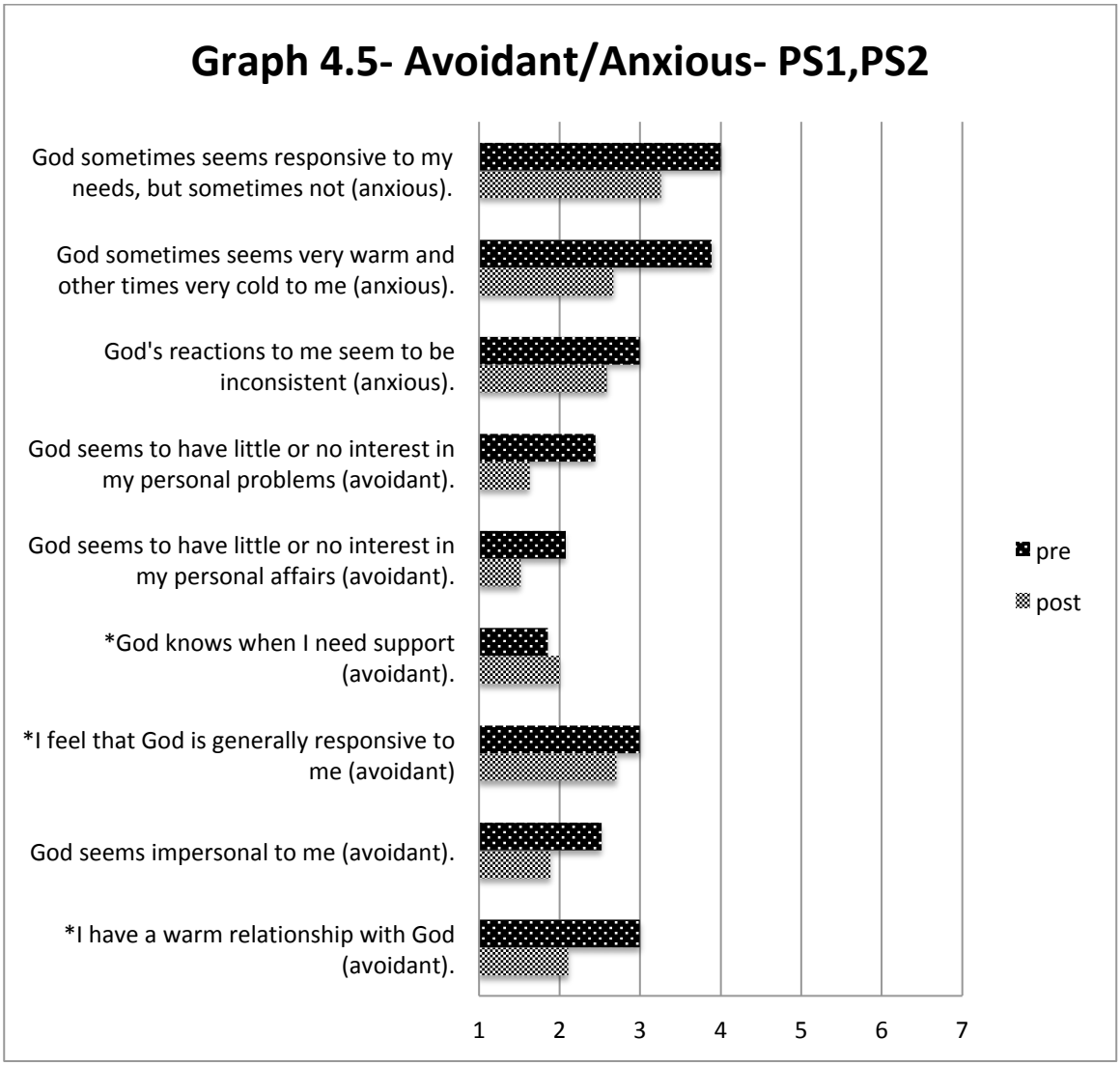
PS2 indicates that the most significant differences in attachment statements pre- and post-intervention were demonstrated in the two statements describing one's relationship with God as potentially "warm." Statement #1, "I have a warm relationship with God," was reverse-scored and classified as an avoidant statement. The mean

difference from pre-test to post-test was -0.88 (SD = 1.05), indicating a significant decrease in avoidant relationship with God, $t(26) = -4.40$, $p < .001$ (one-tailed). Statement #5, "God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me," is classified as an anxious statement. The mean difference from pre-test to post-test was 1.22 (SD = 1.28), indicating a significant decrease in anxious relationship with God, $t(26) = 4.96$, $p < .001$ (one-tailed). Responses to these two statements were the only responses with a p value less than .001. While one of these statements indicates an anxious type relationship and the other an avoidant type, they both describe an experience of God as being potentially "warm."

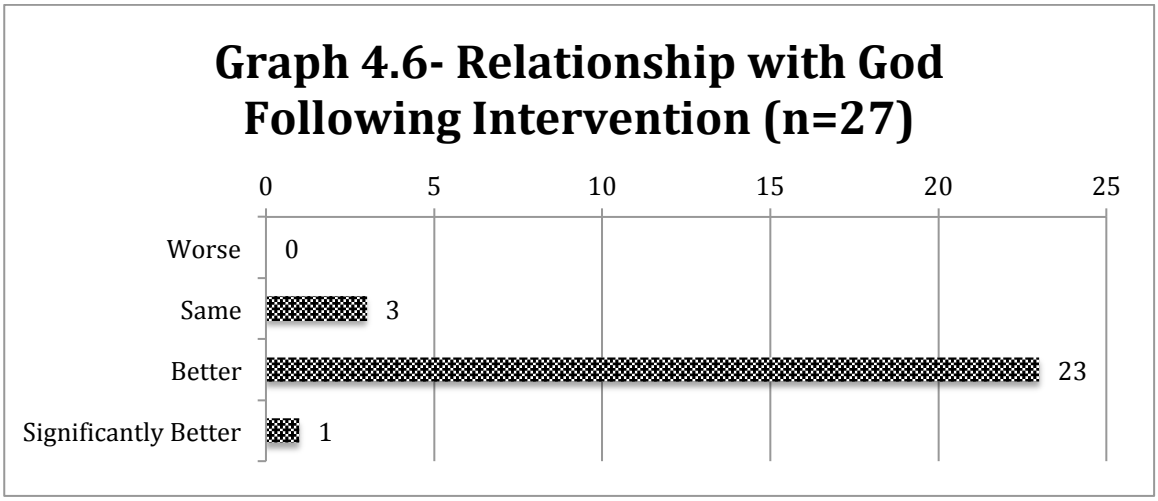
Table 4.1. PS1/PS2 Comparison Responses (Graph 4.5)

Paired Samples Test							
Q#	Pre-Post Survey Questions	Pre-Post Difference			Significance		
	Anxious Type	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t-score	df	p value
8	*God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not.*	0.741	1.631	0.314	2.360	26	0.00698**
5	*God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me.*	1.222	1.281	0.247	4.958	26	0.000019***
3	*God's reactions to me seem to be inconsistent.*	0.407	1.394	0.268	1.519	26	0.071
	Avoidant Type	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t-score	df	p value
9	*God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems.*	0.815	1.520	0.293	2.785	26	0.006317**
7	*God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs.*	0.556	1.086	0.209	2.658	26	0.006633**
6	*God knows when I need support.*	0.148	0.864	0.166	0.891	26	0.191
4	*I feel that God is generally responsive to me.*	-0.296	1.589	0.306	-0.969	26	0.171
2	*God seems impersonal to me.*	0.630	1.445	0.278	2.264	26	0.016108*
1	*I have a warm relationship with God.*	-0.889	1.050	0.202	-4.399	26	0.000082***

*significant in one-tailed t-test where p<.05; **significant in one-tailed t-test where p<.01; ***significant in one-tailed t-test where p<.001



PS2 included an additional quantitative data point not included in the Attachment to God Scale designed to measure the difference participants experienced between their relationship with God before and after the *Practicing Prayer* intervention. It was a forced choice question which asked the participant to "describe any change in your relationship with God since the beginning of this experience." There were four response options: 1) worse, 2) same, 3) better, and 4) significantly better. Of the 37 students who completed PS2, 34 indicated that their relationship with God was "better" or "significantly better" since the beginning of the intervention. Similarly, 24 of the 27 students completing both PS1 and PS2 reported an improvement in their relationship with God (Graph 4.6).



Qualitative data collected supports that participants had a more secure attachment relationship with God following the intervention. This data was collected from three sources. The first source was 2 short response questions included in PS2. The second was from the focus group and interview process. Finally, qualitative data was documented from an unsolicited participant's e-mail.

PS2 included two short answer response questions asking about strengths and weaknesses of the intervention. While not intended to focus on overall impact, some of

the answers provided this data. One participant writes, "I realized that God is so much more than I can EVER fully understand." Another responded that the intervention, "Helped me pray out of gratitude and genuine concern rather than obligation." A third participant cites the "ability to get a feel for His presence" following the intervention.

The focus group and interview process directly asked participants about their relationship with God, including the question, "If you had one moment to share with a peer how this practice has impacted your relationship with God, what would you say?" All five participants (four in focus group and one interview) mentioned how this intervention has changed their behaviors, with "focus" being the most common theme. One participant went beyond the topic of focus, communicating that the *Practicing Prayer* intervention had impacted her relationship with God in a way that indicates more secure attachment (below):

> It has turned my ear more to the Holy Spirit- especially about intercession. It has helped me slow down and not be preoccupied with my words, and not praying out of my strength; but out of God's strength. It unified my relationship with God and on focusing on his will more than my own.

The third piece of qualitative data collected supporting the positive impact of the *Practicing Prayer* intervention was an unsolicited e-mail received from a participant after the third session. During the third session, I guided the participants through an intercessory prayer activity, and she wanted to share her experience of a vision she had that she believes was from God. Below is her account of the final scene of that vision.

> I get up off the ground, turn around to see a little girl. About 7 years old, with brown hair in pigtails tied up with blue ribbons. She had freckles… I saw the world through her eyes, integral moments of decisions that would impact the core of her identity. Would it be placed in God or man? From a third person point of view, I saw her walk across the room. I switched back and forth between her eyes and seeing her walk. As she walks, she

> grows older. At the end, she looks over her right shoulder, directly at me. She is twenty now, she already has smile lines in her eyes. This picture was long, years long, but only in the moment of a breath as I sat in the chapel.
>
> Identity. I think she might have been me.

While she does not directly state in her testimony the impact of this vision on her relationship with God, she does describe a very intimate experience that indicates a secure relationship with God and spoke to the way she sees herself. It also stimulated further conversation between her and I and ultimately to her seeking out a mentor within her community.

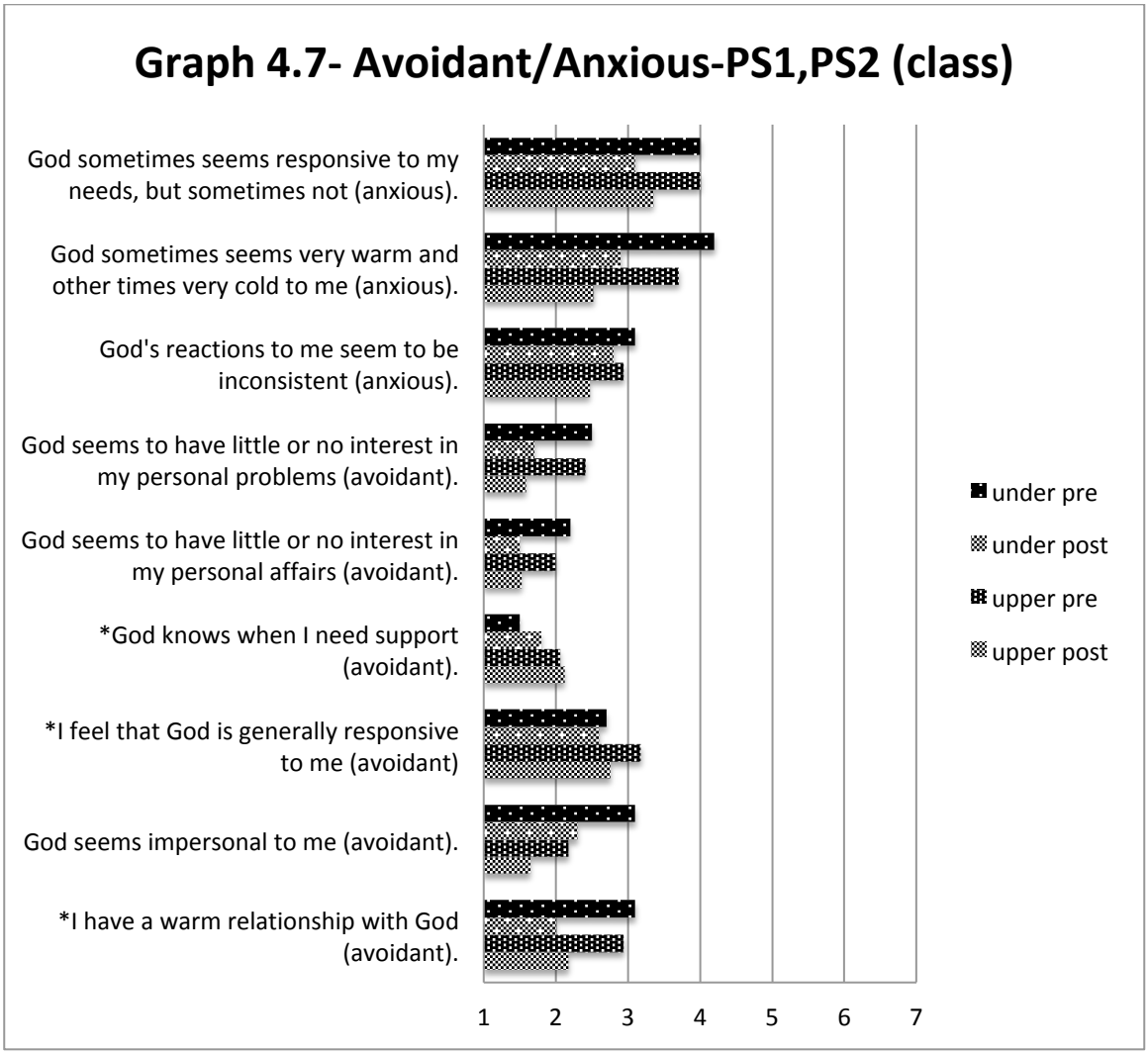
Enrollment Status (class)

Enrollment status (class) was a variable that made only a slight difference when measuring the impact of the intervention, with upperclassmen being impacted slightly more. This was demonstrated most clearly in the difference of pre/post-intervention scores in statements #2, #4, and #9 (Table 4.2). However, Freshman and Sophomores had a more significant difference in pre/post-intervention scores when responding to the avoidant statement, “God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs,” ($t(9) = 2.33$, $p = .022$) than Juniors and Seniors ($t(16) = 1.65$, $p = .059$).

Table 4.2. PS1/PS2 Responses by Class (Graph 4.7)

Paired Samples Test (class)														
Q#	Pre-Post Survey Questions	Pre-Post Difference						Significance						
	Anxious Type	Mean		Std. Dev.		Std. Error		t-score		df		p value		
		under	upper	under	upper	under	upper	under	upper	under	upper	under	upper	
8	*God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not.*	0.90	0.65	1.79	1.58	0.57	0.38	1.588	1.690	9	16	0.073	0.055	
5	*God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me.*	1.30	1.18	1.16	1.38	0.37	0.33	3.545	3.515	9	16	0.003***	0.001***	
3	*God's reactions to me seem to be inconsistent.*	0.30	0.47	1.34	1.46	0.42	0.35	0.709	1.326	9	16	0.248	0.101	
	Avoidant Type	Mean		Std. Dev.		Std. Error		t-score		df		p value		
		under	upper	under	upper	under	upper	under	upper	under	upper	under	upper	
9	*God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems.*	0.80	0.82	1.62	1.51	0.51	0.37	1.562	2.249	9	16	0.077	0.019*	
7	*God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs.*	0.70	0.47	0.95	1.18	0.30	0.29	2.333	1.646	9	16	0.022*	0.059	
6	*God knows when I need support.*	0.30	0.06	1.16	0.66	0.37	0.16	0.818	0.368	9	16	0.385	0.358	
4	*I feel that God is generally responsive to me.*	-0.10	-0.41	1.60	1.62	0.50	0.39	-0.198	-1.046	9	16	0.430	0.155	
2	*God seems impersonal to me.*	0.80	0.53	1.81	1.23	0.57	0.30	1.395	1.774	9	16	0.099	0.048*	
1	*I have a warm relationship with God.*	-1.10	-0.76	0.57	1.25	0.18	0.30	-6.128	-2.519	9	16	0.001***	0.011*	

*significant in one-tailed t-test where p<.05; **significant in one-tailed t-test where p<.01; ***significant in one-tailed t-test where p<.005



Gender

PS2 indicates that males and females were impacted somewhat differently by the *Practicing Prayer* intervention. While both groups had significant pre/post-test differences (one tailed t-tests), females showed more significant differences in responses to anxious-type attachment statements and males showed more significant differences in avoidant-type attachment statements. The only deviation to this is statement #9 (avoidant-type), "God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems." For this avoidant-type attachment statement, the difference in pre/post-test responses was more significant for females ($t(12) = 2.22$, $p = .023$) than it was for males ($t(13) = 1.68$, $p = .058$).

The pre/post-test difference for all three anxious-type statements was more significant for females. The difference in pre/post-test female responses to statement #8, "God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not," was 0.85 ($SD = 1.41$), ($t(12) = 2.17$, $p = .025$). The difference in pre/post-test male responses was 0.64 ($SD = 1.86$), ($t(13) = 1.29$, $p = .110$). The difference in pre/post-test female responses to statement #5, "God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me," was 1.46 ($SD = 1.27$), ($t(12) = 4.16$, $p = .001$). The difference in pre/post-test male responses to statement #5 was 1.00 ($SD = 1.30$), ($t(13) = 2.88$, $p = .006$). Pre/post-test differences to statement #3, "God's reactions to me seem to be inconsistent," were relatively similar across genders, showing only a slightly more significant difference for females (Table 4.3).

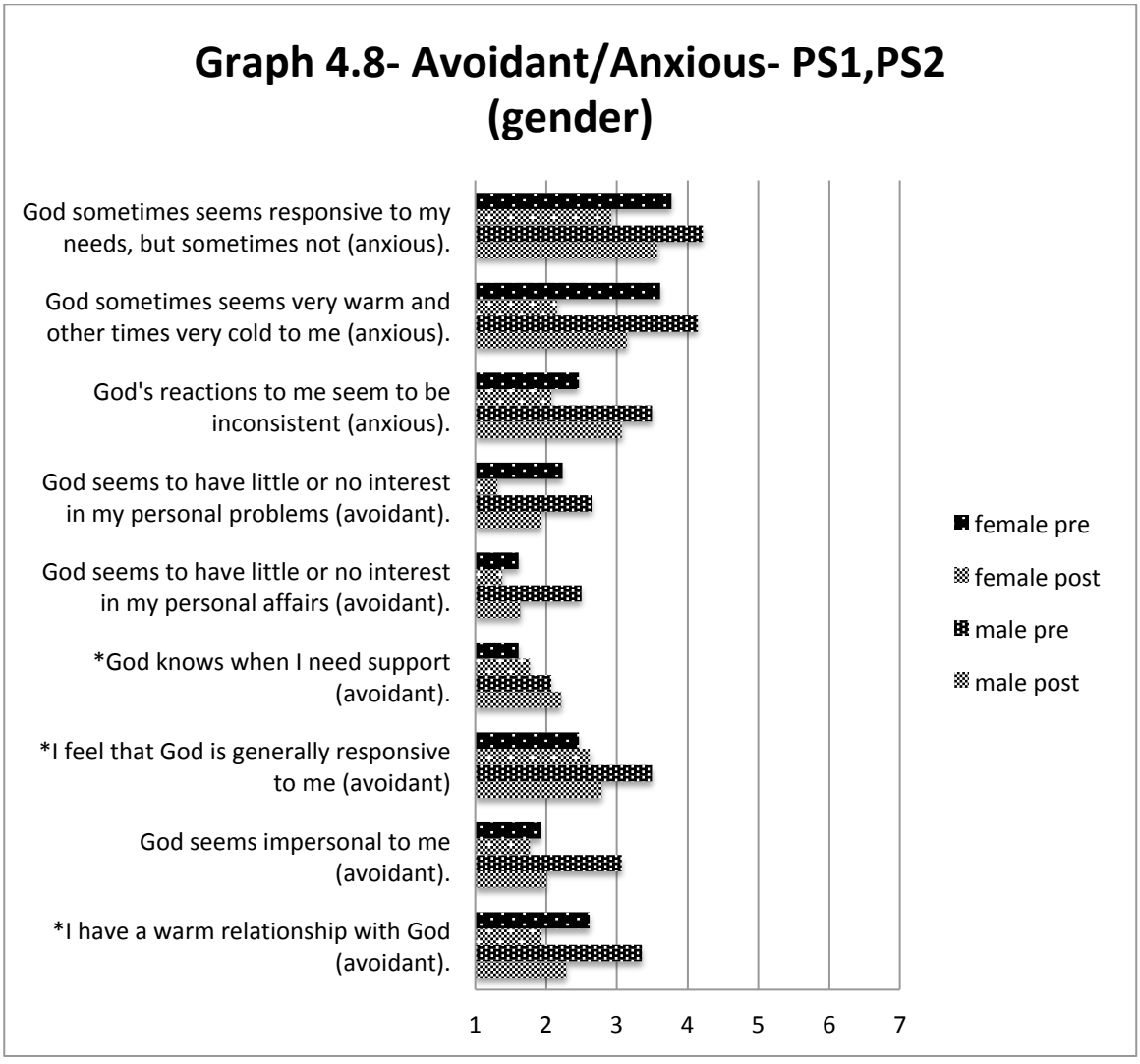
Males tended to indicate more significant differences in their pre/post-test responses to avoidant-type attachment questions. This was most notably found in three of

the six avoidant-type attachment statements found in PS1 and PS2. In response to statement #7, “God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs,” males indicated a pre/post-test difference of 0.86 (SD = 1.35), ($t(13) = 2.38$, $p = .017$). This was more significant than the female pre/post-test difference of 0.23 (SD = 0.60), ($t(12) = 1.39$, $p = .095$). Likewise, males indicated a more significant difference in their pre/post-test responses to statement #2, “God seems impersonal to me,” with a mean difference of 1.07 (SD = 1.69), ($t(13) = 2.38$, $p = .017$). Females report a pre/post-test mean difference to statement #2 of 0.15 (SD = 0.99), ($t(12) = 0.56$, $p = .293$). While not statistically significant where $p < .05$, responses to statement #4, “I feel that God is generally responsive to me,” are also notable. The male pre/post-test difference to this reverse-scored avoidant attachment statement was -0.71 (SD = 1.86), ($t(13) = -1.44$, $p = .087$). On average, females were less inclined to agree with this statement in the post-test, creating a mean pre/post-test difference of 0.15 (SD = 1.14), ($t(12) = .485$, $p = .316$).

Table 4.3. PS1/PS2 Responses by Gender (Graph 4.8)

Paired Samples Test (gender)													
Q#	Pre-Post Survey Questions	Pre-Post Difference						Significance					
Anxious Type		Mean		Std. Dev.		Std. Error		t-score		df		p value	
		f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m
8	*God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not.*	0.85	0.64	1.41	1.86	0.39	0.50	2.171	1.290	12	13	0.025*	0.110
5	*God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me.*	1.46	1.00	1.27	1.30	0.35	0.35	4.163	2.876	12	13	0.001***	0.006**
3	*God's reactions to me seem to be inconsistent.*	0.38	0.43	1.19	1.60	0.33	0.43	1.162	1.000	12	13	0.134	0.168
Avoidant Type		Mean		Std. Dev.		Std. Error		t-score		df		p value	
		f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m
9	*God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems.*	0.92	0.71	1.50	1.59	0.42	0.42	2.222	1.681	12	13	0.023*	0.058
7	*God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs.*	0.23	0.86	0.60	1.35	0.17	0.36	1.389	2.375	12	13	0.095	0.017*
6	*God knows when I need support.*	0.15	0.14	0.69	1.03	0.19	0.27	0.805	0.520	12	13	0.217	0.301
4	*I feel that God is generally responsive to me.*	0.15	-0.71	1.14	1.86	0.32	0.50	0.485	-1.439	12	13	0.316	0.087
2	*God seems impersonal to me.*	0.15	1.07	0.99	1.69	0.27	0.45	0.562	2.379	12	13	0.293	0.017*
1	*I have a warm relationship with God.*	-0.69	-1.07	0.75	1.27	0.21	0.34	-3.323	-3.160	12	13	0.003***	0.003***

*significant in one-tailed t-test where p<.05; **significant in one-tailed t-test where p<.01; ***significant in one-tailed t-test where p<.005



Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

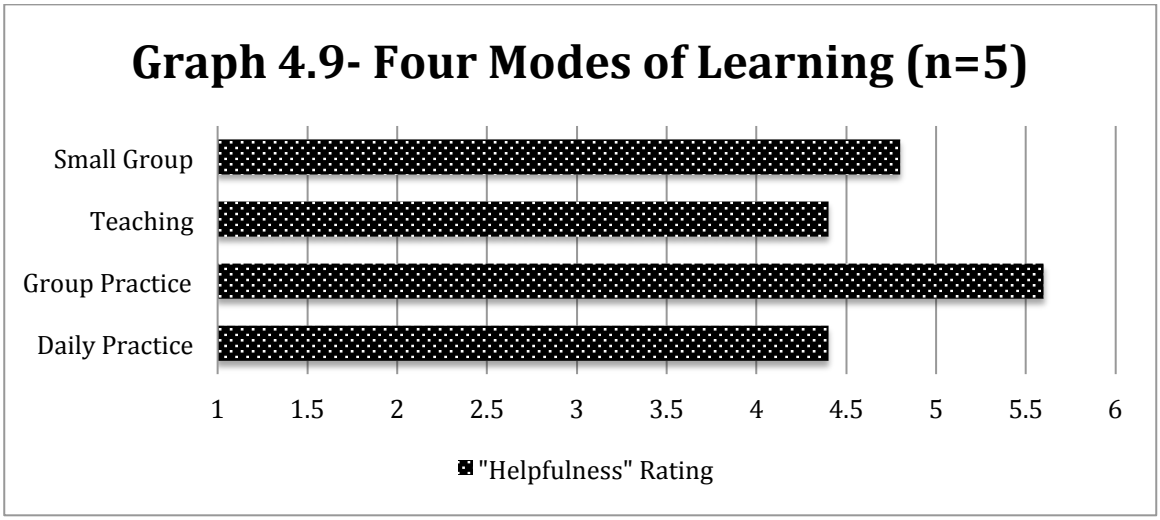
The final research question addressed specific strengths and weaknesses of the *Practicing Prayer* intervention as perceived by the participants. This data was collected in PS2 through open response questions and was the primary topic of focus group and interview questions. Data was sorted and analyzed to assess the methodology of the intervention as well as the content. First, data was sorted and analyzed according to strengths and weaknesses of the methodology used to deliver the content. These groupings were pre-determined, including the four distinct aspects of the experiential learning model as delivered in this intervention. Second, the data was sorted and analyzed according to content delivered. This data was intentionally not sorted according to themes emerging from responses to determine if the primary content the researcher intended to communicate was even identified by participants. This method was also used to identify unintended themes in the content that may need to be emphasized more or less in future implementation.

Methodology

Two focus groups were scheduled to meet three weeks following the intervention to collect additional data. Focus group one consisted of four group leaders. Only one participant attended focus group two (non-leaders), essentially making this an interview. These participants reflected on the overall personal impact of the intervention and specifically addressed strengths and weaknesses of how content was delivered through each of the four components of the experiential learning model. Four of the five specific questions asked by the facilitator in this process evaluated each of the four learning

components: 1) small group reflection, 2) direct instruction, 3) inter-active group practice, and 4) daily individual practice of prayer throughout the week. Qualitative data from participants in PS2 was also included to evaluate methodology.

Quantitative data was collected from the focus group and interview participants asking them to rate the "helpfulness" of each component of the intervention on a scale from 1-6. While the sample size was too small to come to statistically significant conclusions (n=5), it does support one of the predominant themes in the qualitative data. With a mean score of 5.6, the focus group reported that collectively practicing prayer in a guided setting was the most helpful component of the experiential learning methodology (Graph 4.9). All participants ranked this component as more helpful than any other component (or tied as the most helpful).



Small group reflection. Focus groups ranked the small group reflection time at the beginning of each session as the second most helpful component of the intervention, agreeing in their discussion that these groups were helpful in building community. The

following individual supported this sentiment in an interview, stating; “It was helpful hearing from other people and their experiences… It helped to ease into the night and the time and gave us time to catch up on the week.” However, only three out of 38 responses to the PS2 questions asking about perceived strengths of the intervention included small groups as part of their open-ended response. Even among those who were positive about the small groups, only one response was unqualified. This participant writes, “I loved having the same group every week.” However, this is contrary to four responses by others indicating a “lack of connection” with their group. The lack of feedback regarding small groups, combined with mixed experiences of small groups, makes it difficult to come to any significant conclusions regarding this component of the intervention.

Direct instruction. Two primary themes emerged regarding the direct instruction component of the *Practicing Prayer* intervention. First, the teaching was helpful. Second, the teaching was too long.

The majority of comments recorded were positive regarding the content and delivery of the instruction. Responding to the PS2 question about overall strengths of the intervention, one participant writes, “Chris’s teaching was excellent. Humbly and wisely presented.” Another states that the teaching sections “were really helpful.” The focus group agreed that the teaching provided “critical foundational information” and was “supported by Scripture.” They also agreed that they liked the handouts and wished more had been provided. However, they had definite (although mixed) opinions about the length of time spent on teaching.

Of the negative comments regarding teaching, most had to do with the length of the presentations. The focus group conversation below was in response to the question, "How helpful were the teaching segments in supporting you in the practice of prayer?"

> Person 1: Not as helpful as I would have liked them to be…maybe too long…
> Person 2: I agree. Teaching was too long. People checked out and wanted to move on…
> Person 3: No. Teaching was an essential part. Without it we wouldn't have been able to properly participate…
> Person 4: The teaching could've been shorter for practicing prayer, but there's so much to teach. It's hard to condense that.

Two respondents cite length of teaching as a weakness of the intervention in PS2.

Group practice of prayer. Practicing different types of prayer together at the end of each session was perceived by participants to be the most helpful component of this intervention. Ten of 38 respondents in PS2 referenced this component specifically in the open-ended response question about strengths of the intervention (more than three times that of any other component). Three more responses in PS2 confirmed this sentiment by indicating that a weakness of the intervention was that not enough time was spent practicing during sessions. The focus group unanimously agreed that this was the most helpful component and more time needed to be spent practicing. In their discussion, the group described this component as "the most helpful par," "the most important part," and "extraordinarily helpful."

Participants indicated in PS2 and the focus group that the practice component at the end of each session was helpful, because it challenged them to try something new while in a safe environment, and gave them an opportunity to practice it before doing it on their own. One focus group member conveyed this in the following statement, "This is

a safe place that you can step outside of your comfort zone because we are all learning and all doing it." Sharing a similar sentiment, a respondent in PS2 writes, "It was a safe space to practice each prayer without fear of being wrong or not using the right words. Almost being forced to do things helped me break out of my comfort zone to do some prayer activities I normally would shy away from." Other comments were less specific but reinforced the value of being challenged to pray in new ways and of practicing together prior to attempting to do it on their own during the week.

The group practice component of the intervention was typically guided by the facilitator to help participants engage in new or potentially uncomfortable ways to pray. Several group leaders commented that this was a helpful practice throughout the intervention. One focus group member said, "Without [being led], we might have felt a little lost with how to do it."

Daily practice of prayer. Responses found in PS2 align with the focus group's rating of the practice of daily prayer as the least helpful component of the four, with nearly one quarter of the respondents writing about this component as a weakness (9 of 38). The reason given for this component being a weakness was because it was not done. Most of the participants responding this way took personal responsibility for this, citing a lack of motivation or forgetfulness as reasons for not praying throughout the week. Others pointed to outside circumstances such as busyness or academics. However, a small sampling of data provides some insight on how this component might have been implemented differently to be more helpful.

Both focus group participants and survey respondents cited that the supports provided for daily prayer were helpful and indicated that additional supports were needed to help them establish this discipline. The handouts provided at the end of most sessions were emphasized as being particularly helpful, with many suggesting that something similar be provided every week. For some this provided a sense of accountability, while others found them as a helpful reminder, or a guide for that specific type of prayer throughout the week.

The use of technology as a support for daily prayer was another feature of the intervention receiving feedback from participants. While no survey respondents or focus group participants indicated that the use of technology to support was detrimental, responses on its effectiveness were mixed. One focus group member stated that the "group chat was helpful for praise and thanksgiving," but reflected that it would have been better if he did not have two separate group chats going on at the same time. Another focus group member shared that the group chat was not used much in her group, and therefore not helpful. One survey respondent suggested that in addition to small groups supporting each other through group messaging, a mass e-mail could have been sent to all participants each morning that would encourage and remind them to practice prayer.

Content

Qualitative data taken from PS2 and the focus group/nterview process was collected and analyzed to determine what content of the intervention was perceived as most impactful by participants. This content was presented and practiced according to

four types of prayer: 1) praise, 2) thanksgiving, 3) intercession for the world, and 4) intercession for individuals. However, in an effort to determine what concepts were actually transformative, these categories were not pre-selected to sort and analyze data. Instead, the researcher allowed the data itself to inform the categories to be created. This process revealed two predominant themes in the data regarding what was perceived to be the most valuable content: praising God for his very nature and listening for his will.

Praising. Learning about praise was considered by many individuals to be the greatest strength of the intervention. Week one of the *Practicing Prayer* intervention had the whole group reflect on both the immanence and transcendence of God, and what that meant in their relationship with him. They were also reminded that God not only deserves their praise, but it glorifies and pleases him. In PS2, one participant indicated how impactful this was by indicating that a strength of the intervention was "reflecting on who God is as the focus of each prayer." A focus group participant stated, "Praising God for who he is and not just what he's done…changed my perspective."

The group praise activity stretched participants by challenging them to wholeheartedly give God the praise he deserves through movement as well as voice. Many expressed that this was both uncomfortable and yet meaningful. One respondent expresses this sentiment in PS2, writing, "It was nice to be challenged to stretch out of my comfort zone in praising." Focus group members had similar thoughts. One wrote that the praise activity "will stick with me personally, as well as a lot of people." This was confirmed by another member who said, "It was my favorite activity. We usually praise in our seats, but we praised God with our entire being- heart, mind, soul, and

body." Perhaps this statement written in PS2 sums it up as well as any, "I liked the praise activity, it helped me remember the point of all this." The only content receiving more feedback from participants than praising God was the concept (and practice) of listening to God when praying, particularly in intercession.

Intercession/Listening. Reframing prayer as an act of listening as much as talking was heavily emphasized over the course of two sessions on intercession. These sessions taught participants that intercession is not about changing God's will, but about asking God to reveal his will (through Scripture and listening to the Holy Spirit), and then cooperating with it in prayer. Qualitative data from all sources indicate that this was a new and meaningful understanding and practice for many participants. This was demonstrated in the focus group when they were asked if there was a particular concept taught that was particularly important (below).

> Person 1: Intercession definitely…It was helpful to learn the purpose of it.
>
> Person 2: "The emphasis on God's will changed things…"
>
> Person 3: "Yeah…not just asking God to bless what you decide to do."

One focus group member stated that intercession was a particularly meaningful type of prayer to practice because she had to "slow down and listen to the Holy Spirit." Likewise, another participant interviewed stated he was "really impacted" by the concept of taking the time to listen for God's will and to know God's heart prior to interceding, rather than just asking for what "we" want and tacking on "if it's your will" to the end of the prayer. Two respondents to PS2 who echoed the importance of listening for God's will intercession wrote, "it was really good to hear that we should look to understand God's

will rather than just guess," and "we need to listen/ be in communion with God to really enter into prayer well." While learning about listening and intercession was powerful, data also shows that practicing it was a struggle.

Newly learned concepts may have the power to change old thinking while leaving existing practice unchanged. In spite of gaining new insight about intercession, the focus group agreed that intercession was the most difficult practice to implement daily. The group stated two reasons for this challenge. First, was fear. Group members rightly understood the impact intercession could have on others and took it seriously. In spite of reporting that she had "good outcomes," one focus group member spoke about her discomfort with intercession because if her "heart attitude [wasn't] right it could be harmful instead of helpful." Second, listening for and discerning God's will in prayer was a new concept. While two of four teachings were on intercession, one respondent to PS2 expressed the need for more, writing "I am new to this as of this school year but I think a lot of others are too and would get a lot out of more of it." One focus group member described listening to God as a "positive challenge" going on to say, "I was often sitting there like [pause…] I don't know. I don't know what to say, I don't know what is your will." Suggestions made in the focus group to help support this practice included sending out reminders on how Christians can prepare their hearts and seek God's will in daily life so they are more ready to pray in alignment with him; all agreed that having more handouts to refer back to would be helpful and appreciated.

Summary of Major Findings

The data resulting from this project yielded significant findings regarding the effectiveness of the *Practicing Prayer* intervention with students at Indiana Wesleyan University. Quantitative data clearly demonstrates that the relationships participants had with God were significantly less anxious and avoidant after participating. Qualitative data confirms this and provides additional insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention. These are the major findings that are discussed in Chapter 5.

1. Praise and intercession help to form more secure relationships with God.
2. Practicing prayer builds a more secure attachment than learning about prayer.
3. Community support is valuable in the practice of prayer.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Many emerging adults identify themselves as Christians, but seem to lack a transformative relationship with God. Instead of radical obedience to and intimacy with the Almighty God, they have settled for the convenience of a god of their own creation who is not personal and/or powerful. This type of self-focused faith, often referred to as moralistic therapeutic deism, is fueled by the defining characteristics of emerging adulthood along with living in an increasingly consumer-driven society. Failing to acknowledge God as universally sovereign (transcendent) and personally intimate (immanent) results in a relationship with him that is less secure and more likely to be characterized as avoidant or anxious. The purpose of the research was to develop and evaluate the impact of a 4-week prayer intervention for students at Indiana Wesleyan University that focused on looking outside of one's self and connecting with the transcendent and immanent God of the Bible through the practice of praise and intercession. This chapter presents the findings and discusses why they matter.

Chapter 5 synthesizes the specific results of the research found in Chapter 4 with personal experience and the literature review found in Chapter 2, documenting what was learned and how it might apply to ministry in the Kingdom of God. First, it details the three major findings of chapter 4 and considers their ministry implications. Second, it briefly discusses additional unexpected findings. Third, it reflects on the research itself, reviewing its limitations and making recommendations for improvement and suggesting

areas of future research to be engaged in. The chapter concludes on a personal note, documenting my own journey through this process.

Major Findings

This research confirmed three major hypotheses used to develop the intervention. First, the content of this intervention (praise and intercession) was significant to the formation of more secure relationships with God. Second, the experience of engaging God in this practice was more significant than simply learning content. Third, support from others was perceived as being important to the practice of this intervention. This chapter supports these findings through personal experience, literature review, and Biblical reference. Personal observation of the community being studied is often used to support findings. However, as a guest presenter in this community, the researcher was unable to meaningfully observe what was happening in the lives of participants. For this reason, personal experience rather than observations is documented to support findings from the data.

First Finding— Praise and Intercession help to form more secure relationships with God

The first major finding of this research was that practicing praise and intercession helped participants establish a more secure relationship with God. This can be determined based on the quantitative data showing significantly less avoidant and anxious attachment styles in PS2 compared to PS1. In addition, qualitative analysis indicates that learning

about (and practicing) praise and intercession was a perceived strength by the participants.

Personal experience: My personal experience with prayer supports that praise and intercession establish a more secure relationship with God. When I think of others in the Body of Christ, I would by no means consider myself to be a "prayer warrior." My prayers are often half-hearted and feel empty and obligatory. However, when I am intentional about praise and intercession, I become more aware of God's presence, power, and love for me, and all of creation. So how have I experienced this with praise specifically?

I have witnessed God shape hearts, including my own, in the midst of praise. First, my own prayers are significantly different when I take the time to praise the Lord wholeheartedly. As I praise the Almighty, Creator, Redeemer, Provider… I find that petitions jump into my heart that are not selfish, but align with his will. Upon concluding, I am encouraged by knowing I was in his presence. This is confirmed by the positive feedback I have received when leading others through praise, including during this intervention. While I have always experienced praise as a gateway into God's presence, this has not always been the case with intercession.

Intercession did not make me feel any more secure in my relationship with God until I learned that I must seek and not just ask. Once I understood that intercession was about listening and discovering God's will rather than bending it to my own, I began to draw closer to him. One notable experience I had with this was with my pastor and close friend who had been diagnosed with cancer. I remember meeting with him to pray with

and having the expectation that God would bring immediate healing. As I stood over him with my hand on his head and the intention to boldly proclaim a healing prayer, the Holy Spirit convicted me. I clearly understood that an immediate healing was not God's will in this case. He had greater, but more painful, plans for my dear friend. With tears in my eyes, I joined the Lord and prayed for a deeper and longer healing that would extend beyond just the cancer. Two years later, he was cancer free and experienced a greater healing as well. Since that time, I have intentionally listened to God as I pray for others, and my attachment to God becomes more secure as I hear his voice and witness him move powerfully through me in these prayers. While I know this to be personally true, the following section touches on whether other sources, including Scripture, confirm this.

Literature review: Many social scientists that have studied attachment theory support that prayer is positively correlated to a secure attachment to God. Kirkpatrick holds that the most important attachment behavior people display to maintain proximity to God is prayer (Kirkpatrick, "Attachment and Religious Representations and Behavior" 806). Prayer serves this function because it seeks proximity to God as a safe haven in crisis or a secure base for exploration (Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* 61–66; Kirkpatrick, "Attachment Theory and Religious Experience" 456–57). Reed likens prayer to seeking a safe haven by comparing it to the way a baby cries or calls to a parent when in need (15). Allport discovered that God is a similar safe haven for adults in crisis, concluding in his research of combat veterans that the belief in a powerful and present God was comforting (57). Prayer also establishes God as a secure base for exploration similar to the way a young child will look back to find a parent

before exploring new territory (Kirkpatrick, "Attachment Theory and Religious Experience" 457). Without using specific attachment theory terms, the *Flame of Love Project* describes God as similar to a secure base from which to explore, and concludes that Divine Love empowers people to express unconditional love for others (Smith and Snell 47; Smith et al. 27, 33). While social scientists have linked prayer to a secure attachment to God, research that links attachment to God specifically with praise and intercession merits consideration.

Little research has been done connecting praise and intercession with attachment to God for two primary reasons. First, measuring attachment to God is a relatively recent concept with the first measurement tools only being created within the last 25 years. This being the case, no studies were found by the researcher specifically connecting prayer and attachment to God. Second, most research has focused on the impact prayer has on the subject of prayer as opposed to the one praying. These two factors significantly limited the number of relevant studies accessible to the researcher, but did not eliminate them completely.

The most relevant studies of prayer found were three studies measuring the impact of different types of prayer on the general well-being of the pray-er (not attachment to God). One of these studies correlates praise (adoration and thanksgiving) positively with general well-being (Whittington and Scher 59). Unfortunately, two of the studies measuring the general well-being of the pray-er did not include praise as a type of prayer in their research (Poloma and Gallup 25–40; Poloma and Pendleton 80–81). All three studies included either supplication or petitionary prayer in their surveys, and they did not correlate with general well-being. However, they did not define these types of

prayer as a selfless prayer that seeks God in the way intercession is defined and practiced in this intervention. While these larger studies do not explore the impact of this type of intercession, one small study has.

In his research of the impact of intercessory prayer on spiritual growth, Seok measured spiritual maturity before and after intensive intercessory prayer training. In this training, intercession focused on accomplishing God's will rather than on changing God's mind (84). This is more relevant than other studies because the researcher measures a similar type of intercession to what was taught and practiced in the *Practicing Prayer* intervention. While the sample size of his research was very small and were from a very different culture than those in the West, Seok did conclude that the faith of those trained was "much developed" (AB). What evidence supports that in the United States praise and intercession would correlate with a secure attachment to God among emerging adults?

Praise and intercession directly combat what research has shown to be lacking in emerging adult faith in the United States. The combination of being shaped by a consumerist society and living in a stage of life that is focused on self, makes moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD) a natural belief system of choice for many emerging adults. It is self-focused, impersonal, and not demanding (Smith and Denton 165); it integrates seamlessly with a consumerist society that values only what is personally useful (Jethani 36–37). MTD also seemingly supports this self-focused stage of life when personal identity is being formed, providing the personal autonomy so highly valued by emerging adults and lacking any outside moral authority that is resisted by them (Smith et al. 27, 33; Smith and Snell 47). Unfortunately, this does not create a secure attachment with God, but instead keeps God at a distance. While no existing research specifically

connects praise and intercession directly to a secure attachment relationship with God, these types of prayer address what is flawed in MTD. Instead of putting self at the center of faith, both praise and intercession force the pray-er to look outside of self by celebrating the fullness of God and seeking his will.

Scripture: Scripture indicates that praise and intercession support a more secure relationship with God by demonstrating how individuals identify God as a safe-haven in times of crisis and a secure platform from which to explore. Kings, prophets, and New Testament writers all testify and instruct others that God becomes those things by drawing near to those who pray. In one of his great psalms of praise, David writes that the "LORD is righteous…and faithful…[and] ***near*** to all who call on him…" (Ps. 145: 17-18). God speaks to the people of Israel through Jeremiah, telling them one day "you will pray to me, and I will listen… You will seek me and ***find me*** when you seek me with all of your heart" (Jer. 29:11-12). The author of James encourages readers to "draw ***near*** to God, and he will draw ***near*** to you…" (Jas. 4:8a). Finally, Paul emphasizes the secure base function of God to the Philippians, instructing them that when they pray, God's peace will "guard their hearts and minds" (Phil. 4:6-7). Not only do the writers of Scripture teach that prayer establishes a secure relationship with God, but there are many Biblical examples of praise and intercession that seemingly perform this function.

Scripture is filled with examples of praise, reminding the pray-er of the transcendent and immanent nature of God who is both a safe-haven in crisis and a secure platform for exploration. How these prayers impacted the pray-ers relationship with God is not specifically detailed, but the type of language used in these praises along with the

circumstances surrounding them indicate how they likely served this function. For example, after the people of Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry ground and watched the Egyptian army drown under the mighty hand of God they praised him (Exod. 14-15). This behavior could easily be classified as the attachment behavior of social referencing, or in this case God referencing. By praising God, the people of Israel remembered that he is a secure base from which they could embark into the desert. David does likewise throughout the Psalms, and when he sings this praise near the end of his life, calling out to his safe-haven in crisis and his secure base for exploration.

> Safe-haven:
> "The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
> my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
> my shield and the horn of my salvation.
> He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—
> from violent people you save me…(2 Sam. 22:2-3)
>
> Secure base:
> …You, LORD, are my lamp;
> the LORD turns my darkness into light.
> **30** With your help I can advance against a troop;
> with my God I can scale a wall (2 Sam. 22:29-30).

These examples show how praise might function as a form of attachment behavior in Scripture, but what about intercession?

Scripture demonstrates how, when God's people intercede, they become more securely attached to him. As with various accounts of praise, the lack of attachment relationship terminology prior to 1960 requires that linking intercession with attachment to God must be inferred in Scripture. This can be determined by reading how God's people would petition him on behalf of others, looking to him as a safe-haven, a secure

base, or both. Jehoshaphat called upon God as a safe-haven when Jerusalem was under attack; the early church did likewise when it interceded for Peter while he was in jail (2 Chron. 20:5-12; Acts 12:5). Moses relied on God as a secure base when interceding for the army of Israel against the Amalekites (Exod. 17:8-13). Not only do specific examples in Scripture show how this relationship works, core teachings about love and obedience reinforce this conclusion.

Scripture supports that praise and intercession help to establish a secure attachment to God because they are acts of obedience to God's greatest commandment. Praising God is an act of loving God, and intercession is an act of love toward others (Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:29-31). Jesus also tells his disciples that if they obey his commands, they will "remain in his love" (John 15:10). While not the technical definition of secure attachment, the connection between "remaining in his love" through obedience and "secure attachment" is clear. Therefore, when praising God and interceding on behalf of others, God's people are securely attaching themselves to God as they obediently love God and love others. While these passages do not directly use attachment terms, they are perhaps the most compelling evidence because they fundamentally connect praise and intercession to remaining in God's love through obedience to the Great Commandment.

Second Finding— Practice builds a more secure attachment than learning content

The findings of this research project support the contention that the practice of prayer is more influential in establishing a secure relationship with God than learning about prayer. This conclusion is not only supported from the data indicating the overall

effectiveness of the intervention, but also from qualitative data indicating that the group practice component was the greatest strength of this intervention.

Personal experience: My relationship with God became significantly more secure once I began actually practicing prayer. Growing up and through my college years, my faith was significant to me as a moral compass and brought order to my understanding of the world. As more of a philosopher than a practitioner, I did not grasp that learning about God and prayer was far different from experiencing God in prayer. In seminary, I became exposed to some people who seemed to approach faith differently, but I could not quite understand the difference in them until I started serving my second church. At this church I met Greg Wood and began to regularly practice prayer.

Greg Wood is the person who first helped me regularly open my eyes to God's presence and call upon him in prayer. I still remember having a conversation with Pastor Greg during the first week of my serving in his church as a youth pastor. After sharing our hopes and dreams and listening to my concerns, he put his hand on my shoulder and prayed. He said nothing spectacular, but in that moment, I experienced God's love and grace. I experienced God's presence. I started to realize that God was available to me at all times and my relationship with God became more secure as I regularly prayed to my Savior and Lord. While I often still find myself merely thinking about God, when I remember to practice prayer, I find that my relationship with him becomes more secure. While this has led me to a more secure relationship with God, is there evidence that this might be universally true?

Literature Review: Pedagogical studies indicate that experiential learning is beneficial. In an attempt to determine the effectiveness of experiential learning, the Association of Business Simulation and Experiential Learning (ABSEL) reviewed several studies. They determined that the benefits of experiential learning, relating to cognitive learning of material, were inconclusive. However, they found that participants of experiential learning typically reported having more positive attitudes regarding the concepts being taught than those being taught with different methodologies (Gentry and Association for Business Simulation and Experiential Learning 316). Perhaps more importantly, ABSEL discovered that studies of experiential methodologies almost universally determined that they have a positive impact on the acquisition of skills and behavioral change. Out of 18 studies reviewed, 17 reported that experiential methodologies helped with behavioral change or skill development (317). This research indicates that experiential learning is a strong methodological approach to help with attitude toward prayer as well as developing the skills and motivation to practice it, but what does Scripture say about the importance of experiential learning?

Scripture: Scripture supports experiential learning by its emphasis on the active practice of faith for believers. This emphasis that discipleship is not a passive endeavor is found throughout the Bible. Paul instructs Timothy to "discipline [himself] for the purpose of godliness" (1 Tim. 4:7). The author of James instructs believers that they are only fooling themselves if they simply listen to God's word without doing what it says (Jas. 2:21). Jesus instructs that a wise person must act on his words (Matt.7:24), and repeatedly

invites people to take the action of following him. These passages emphasize that disciples must take action to connect with God.

Third Finding— Community support is valuable in the practice of prayer

The support of others when practicing prayer was determined to be important in this intervention. This conclusion was drawn by quantitative and qualitative data indicating that participants found the group practice component to be the greatest strength of the intervention. Additional qualitative data supported the importance of community, indicating that lack of support from others throughout the week was a perceived weakness.

Personal Experience: The Body of Christ has been critical in my personal journey of connecting with God through prayer. Pastor Greg, who would stop in the middle of conversations to pray, taught me that God is always there for me to call upon. Spending time chanting Psalms and eating in silence with Benedictine monks taught me how to stop and rest in God's love— something books and seminary professors had been telling me for years, but I could not do. Praying with charismatic believers has opened up a world to me that I had read about in Scripture, but was previously judgmental of and afraid to enter into. Without the Body of Christ entering into the presence of God with me, I would likely still have a very limited experience of prayer and of God. Much of my knowledge of God would not be personal, but simply information. Do research and Scripture support that community is important for learning and discipleship?

Literature Review: Cooperative learning is a research-based style of learning that is considered to be among best practices by much of the academic community for many reasons. The literature review revealed, in a study of 113 undergraduate students, that cooperative learning can lead among other things to greater activation, higher levels of motivation and engagement, and greater perceived importance of tasks (Peterson and Miller 132). In the literature review, "competence" and "relatedness" were found to be key factors for intrinsic motivation (Mollica 7–8). Having others to practice with in a cooperative learning environment provides an opportunity for both of these to increase. Another theory linked to cooperative learning is social interdependence theory, which supports the important role community plays in the spiritual formation of believers. Not only does the academic community support the value of cooperative learning, Scripture speaks clearly on this as well.

Scripture: Scripture is filled with examples of God's people supporting one another as they walk with him. Joseph forgave his brothers and provided for his family (Gen. 50:15-21). Moses led the Hebrew people to the edge of the Promised Land (Deut. 34:1-4), and handed the leadership of God's people to Joshua to cross the Jordan with them (Num. 27:15-23, Deut. 34:9). Elisha received a double portion from Elijah (2 Kings 2:9-11). Ruth's mother instructed her to lie at the feet of Boaz, and Boaz became her redeemer (Ruth 3:3-4:17). Mordecai reminded Esther that God had put her in a position that she must not neglect to use when called upon (Esth. 4:12-16). Eli taught Samuel what God's voice sounds like and how to respond to him (1 Sam. 3:1-10). Practicing this, Samuel heard God and anointed David to be king instead of another that might have appeared

more qualified (1 Sam. 16:1-13). Years later Jonathan helped protect David from Saul's anger so that David could eventually become king (I Sam. 20:1-42). Once David became king, Nathan was called upon to support David by rebuking him when he committed adultery and murder (2 Sam. 12:7-14). Even the Apostle Paul's walk with the Lord was dependent on his relationship with others. Listening to and following the counsel of Annanias was an integral part of how his sight was restored (Acts 9:17-19). From this transformation, Paul went on to walk with others in the faith, including: Timothy, Barnabas, and Silas (Act 6:1-3, 9:27, 15:40).

Biblical examples of God's people walking with one another in faith are not limited to individual relationships. Dependence upon one another is clearly described as part of the early church (Acts 2:42-47). When the church is unable to care for widows and orphans, deacons are appointed to these tasks (Acts 6:1-15). When called upon to seek the Lord's will regarding his work among the Gentiles, Paul returns to Jerusalem to seek counsel (Acts 15:1-21). Not only do all of these examples provide evidence of the early church walking together in faith, Scripture gives specific instruction that his people are to live as one Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

Scripture is clear that followers of God are not to walk alone in their faith by describing the Church collectively as Christ's body. Paul explains that no individual part of the body can function independently, but instead its parts are interdependent (1 Cor. 12:12-31). While this passage emphasizes an individual's need for others, it also is a reminder that members of the body are never alone. When Christ physically left earth, his body remained in the form of the Church. This means that by the power of the Holy Spirit, individuals can still physically follow Him by following one another! Not only is

the Church directed to walk together, the number of passages describing how it is to do so implies that it is called to do so.

Scripture clearly supports that individuals are intended to walk together as the Body of Christ by the sheer volume of passages instructing the Church how it is to do so. Paul writes to the Galatians that they are to "share [their] burdens with each other, and in this way obey the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). He calls the Corinthians and Ephesians to unity (1 Cor. 1:10, Eph. 4:3), and challenges the Philippians by writing, "Don't look out for only your own interests, but take an interest in others too" (Phil. 2:4). The Thessalonians are to "warn those who are lazy, encourage those who are timid, take tender care of those who are weak [and] be patient with everyone" (1 Thess. 5:14). Paul is not the only author to give instruction on how the church must walk together. John writes that they must "love one another" (1 John 3:11), Peter instructs the Church to be "kind and humble" (1 Pet. 3:8), and the author of Hebrews encourages the Body to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24).

Ministry Implications of the Findings

One implication of these findings is that ministries need to teach the body of Christ about the character of God and the purpose of prayer. Culture influences how individuals perceive God and how they pray. Those growing up in charismatic churches pray differently than those growing up in evangelical churches. People who come from generational poverty pray differently than those who are relatively affluent. Emerging adults in the United States live in a culture that is consumer-driven and individualistic. As a result, without proper teaching and practice, they are prone to lift up heartfelt prayers

for things they want, but are not necessarily kingdom-oriented. When God does not respond to those prayers in the way that is desired, he can seem inconsistent or even not present, leading to a more anxious or avoidant relationship instead of a secure one. By teaching them about God's character, pray-ers become more aware of whom they are praying to. Learning the purpose of prayer leads to listening. Both of these are rooted in humility, breaking cultural influences and establishing a more secure relationship with God, but they do so in different ways.

Teaching about God's character and praising him helps pray-ers become more aware of whom they are praying to. This is important because establishing God's power, along with his presence, in the heart of a pray-er fosters a more secure relationship with him. While humbling themselves in praise before the Almighty Emmanuel, pray-ers discover that God is a safe-haven and solid foundation.

Prayer fundamentally changes once the pray-er understands its purpose. Prayer is not primarily about comfort or personal gain, but about connecting/ abiding in God. With this as the purpose, petitions become focused on humbly discerning God's will by listening instead of bending God's will by asking. By aligning with and praying petitions that are in agreement with God, the pray-er experiences the consistency of a Father who gives good gifts to his children.

Ministries need to equip the body of Christ by teaching prayer. Specifically, praise and intercession support the building of more secure relationships with God by helping the pray-er understand God's character and to listen for his will. Without such teaching, prayers are shaped by a consumer-driven individualistic culture that minimizes the power and love of God.

A broader implication of these findings is that the Church must move away from consumer models of spiritual formation and embrace its calling to equip the body of Christ to practice its faith. Christian colleges and universities produce a significant amount of informational teaching about faith for students. I have found this to be true of most mainline denominational and evangelical churches as well. With current technology, even many of those not involved with a community of believers have access to a plethora of Biblical teaching. In spite of this, many ministries continue to focus on producing more informational content for people to consume when gathered together, leaving the practice of spiritual disciplines—such as personal prayer, engaging Scripture, and sharing the Gospel, to name a few— up to individuals to practice on their own.

Spiritual formation efforts must include a "follow me" approach, practicing disciplines together with the support of the corporate body. This approach to spiritual formation requires believers to become socially interdependent and push through the individualistic mindset of culture, building competency and unity through practicing with one another. Bible study leaders must not simply give answers about the content of a passage, but uncover content with participants. This is not as easy, but it teaches participants how to understand and be transformed when reading Scripture themselves. Evangelism training must include actually sharing the gospel with others, or ,at the very least, practicing together to help ease the fears involved. Likewise, the Church must practice prayer together and not simply lift up prayer requests with the promise to pray later. Prayer training must extend beyond acronyms and ideas to try during personal quiet times, which may or may not happen at home. It must include demonstration and practice

in the moment. Regardless of the discipline, practicing together helps believers as they journey outside of personal routines and comfort zones and engage with God.

Limitations of the Study

Factors that limited the generalizability of this study can be place into two categories. The first group of factors relate to the research process itself. They include limitations in methodology and homogeneity of the sample population. The second group of factors relate to how the intervention was implemented and how reproducible it is.

The research itself is limited in generalizability because of the homogeneity of the participants and the lack of participation in focus groups. The student population at Indiana Wesleyan University is not diverse, and this was also the case with the intervention. While no data was collected regarding ethnicity, approximately 3-5% of the participants were people of color. This makes the data not generalizable to other populations. The lack of participation in focus groups also limited the generalizability of the data collected through this method. The plan was to have two focus groups of 5-7 people each. Instead, one group had four participants and the other ended up being an interview with one person.

The second reason the findings from this study are difficult to generalize is because the effectiveness of the intervention may have depended on variables that are difficult to reproduce. This includes decisions about logistics and presentation that must be made based on the circumstances. For example, how space is managed and utilized is an important variable when asking people to engage. After meeting in one location, it was determined that the group needed to meet somewhere that was more spacious and not as

warm. The number of participants also impacted what prayer activities were selected and what ones were discarded to meet time restraints while maintaining the integrity of the intervention. Facilitators also have different styles, strengths, and levels of ability. As the presenter, I brought personal examples that others would not have to explain different concepts. I also had significant mastery of the material because I created it. Finally, as the father of the student body chaplain, I had a degree of built-in credibility with participants that other outside presenters may not have. Any of these variables might impact the effectiveness of the intervention, therefore somewhat limiting the generalizability of the study to other settings.

Unexpected Observations

One unexpected observation of the findings was discovering how gender correlated with the participant's general attachment relationship with God and how the intervention impacted each gender differently. My own personal experience and bias would have led me to intuitively predict that men would have a tendency to have more avoidant-type relationships with God and women would have a tendency toward more anxious-type relationships with God. The results of PS1 and PS2 showed otherwise, indicating that male participants were both more avoidant and more anxious in their relationship to God than their female counterparts. However, PS1 and PS2 did show that the impact of the *Practicing Prayer* intervention impacted men and women differently. Responses in PS1 and PS2 indicate that the intervention helped females become less anxious in their relationship with God while it helped males become less avoidant.

Another unexpected observation from PS1 and PS2 was that, as a group, participants indicated their relationship with God was more anxious than it was avoidant. My initial assumption was that as emerging adults, participants would be more avoidant, being comfortable keeping God at a distance. However, after considering the population I surveyed, it made more sense. As students at a relatively conservative Christian university, many of the participants likely had grown up in Christian homes without questioning their faith, and still desire a close relationship with God. However, as emerging adults, the faith of their childhood is challenged from many different directions, potentially leading to a more anxious-type relationship with God.

The final unexpected observation was that participants reported that they were most significantly impacted by the intervention when describing their relationship with God in terms of being "warm." Of the nine questions in PS1 and PS2, two described the participant's relationship with God in this way. One of these questions measured avoidant-type relationships and the other measured anxious-type relationships, but they both used the term "warm" to describe relationship with God. Both males and females reported the most significant change in the security of their relationship with God in these two questions.

Recommendations

Two recommendations emerge from this project. First, attachment to God is a meaningful tool for measuring spiritual formation that should be used in future research. Second, a systematic method, for replicating the *Practicing Prayer* intervention to be implemented on a broader scale, needs to be developed.

First, attachment to God is a meaningful indicator of measuring spiritual formation that should be used in future research. Many instruments that measure spiritual formation focus on behaviors and/ or beliefs. However, neither behaviors nor beliefs necessarily measure relationship. This is a problem because one's relationship with Jesus Christ is what continually transforms the believer. Behaviors (prayer, church attendance, Bible reading, etc.) and beliefs (Christ died for our salvation, God created the world, etc.) are important in the formation of a relationship, but they do not always correlate with an individual's relationship with God. This may be particularly true of individuals who have been part of the church for a long period of time, and who have established behaviors and beliefs that may reflect a habit more than a transformative relationship with God.

Researchers must select an instrument that measures what is to be learned. If researchers seek to determine the impact of a variable on behavior, they should measure behavior. If researchers seek to determine the impact of a variable on belief, they should measure belief. However, if researchers seek to measure spiritual formation, I would recommend that attachment to God be seriously considered as an alternative, because relationship with God is what ultimately transforms.

The second recommendation is to create the materials and systems needed for continued implementation of the *Practicing Prayer* intervention for broader use by the Church. Based on participant feedback, more take-home materials need to be developed to support the practice of prayer between sessions. This might include online resources or a workbook. A more critical and challenging task is how to support those who would be facilitating or leading groups. Without a skilled facilitator or small group leader,

participants would be unlikely to fully engage in the practice of praying in new ways together.

For this intervention to be reproduced on a larger scale, facilitators and small group leaders must be supported. A leader's manual could be created, but such manuals are often not followed. Knowing how often I neglect to follow (or even purchase) such manuals leads to concerns about the fidelity of implementation. This is particularly true knowing the tendency many groups have to talk about prayer, and the resistance to actually practicing prayer. Even those desiring to follow a manual might not have the necessary skill set to create a safe environment that supports and challenges participants to step outside of their comfort zones and pray together. This concern about fidelity could be addressed through video support. By recording teaching points and guided prayer activities, the content would likely be presented in a more consistent way. However. pre-recorded video is less personal and lacks the ability to respond to the individual needs of groups and what might be happening in the room during prayer. So what is the best option?

Perhaps the most effective way to implement *Practicing Prayer* with fidelity is to train facilitators. With training, facilitators would not only learn the content of the intervention, but also the heart of why it works. They would be able to practice different prayer activities as participants prior to being asked to lead them on their own. They could also learn how to choose the right activity for a group based on variables such as group size, theology, and comfort level with prayer. Finally, precautions could be given about the unintended hurt that can result from spiritual manipulation and pushing people

too far outside of their comfort zone. The greatest drawback to this strategy is that the material would not be accessible to those unwilling to be trained.

Postscript

The hard work of researching and overcoming the personal obstacles of writing this dissertation have made for a difficult but rewarding journey. Part of the reward is the degree I will earn. More importantly, my reward has been the way it has impacted the relationship I have with myself, with my son, and with my Father in Heaven.

Completing this dissertation has helped me to see myself differently. I always knew I was intelligent, but due to lack of focus and initiative I often felt like I had failed to steward this gift well. I had many ideas, but often lacked follow through to implement them. I seriously questioned my ability to complete a dissertation. It was difficult to get started, and then get started again… and again; but each time I completed another chapter, I gained more confidence. Now that I have finished, I am able to see myself as a person with a level of expertise in prayer who has the discipline to accomplish difficult tasks, including the further implementation of *Practicing Prayer* and turning this dissertation into a book that more than 5 people might read!

This dissertation gave me the opportunity to interact with my son as a man and as a ministry partner. I would be remiss to not acknowledge his role in the successful implementation of this intervention. He was my ministry contact at Indiana Wesleyan University responsible for logistics, recruitment, and supporting the chaplains in their role as small group leaders. Without him, I could not have done this research. Our relationship has always been strong, but working together helped us to learn how to relate

to one another as adults and partners in ministry. This was not only valuable to our father-son relationship, but it also paved the way for possible ministry together in the future.

Finally, my relationship with God has grown through this process. As crazy as it may sound, my love for God was rekindled during the literature review process! Analyzing the writings of men and women of God and synthesizing them helped me reflect on who God is and how he moves. Being able to share what God had put in my heart during the implementation of the intervention drew me closer yet, and analyzing the data confirmed to me that God has a plan for me to continue this work in the future.

APPENDIXES

A. Informed Consent Letter

B. Survey/Interview Schedule and Questions

1. Survey/Interview Schedule
2. Pre-Attachment to God Survey (PS1)
3. Post-Attachment to God Survey (PS2)
4. Focus Group Facilitator Questions and Guide

C. *Practicing Prayer* Intervention Outline

Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Chris Palmer from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are a student at Indiana Wesleyan University between the ages of 18-29 that plans on participating in the *Practicing Prayer* intervention to the best of their ability.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to attend five weekly sessions focused on prayers of praise and intercession, and asked to practice these disciplines throughout the week. At the first and last sessions, you will be asked to complete an online survey that focuses on your feelings of attachment to God. Those who attend at least four sessions and practice prayer throughout the week will be asked to volunteer to participate in an optional 90-minute focus group following spring break. Members of focus groups will be asked to provide feedback regarding specific aspects of the *Practicing Prayer* intervention and the perceived impact it had on them personally.

Several steps will be taken to maintain confidentiality throughout this process. Your name will not be connected to any survey information. You will create a personal code known only by you. Identities from focus groups will be kept confidential as well. The name of focus group members will not be shared with anyone outside the research team. Those selected to be in a focus group will be contacted directly by the researcher, Chris Palmer, or student body chaplains, Ben Palmer and Becky Anderson. The student body chaplains will conduct the groups and take notes. The group discussion will be recorded to collect accurate information. Both the notes and the recording will be given directly to the researcher, Chris Palmer, and shared with transcriptionist, Linda Palmer. All members of the research team have read and signed confidentiality agreements, assuring that your name will not be shared with anyone else in this process.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Chris Palmer who can be reached at christopher.palmer@asburyseminary.edu, or your student body chaplains. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions in the survey or focus groups, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Chris Palmer at the above e-mail.

Agreeing "to the terms found in the informed consent letter" means that you have read this statement or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do. If you do not want to be in the study, simply do not click on the box below (online). Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not choose to do so, or even if you change your mind later.

(online informed consent given by clicking box included in PS1 stating: "I agree to the terms found in the informed consent letter above."**)**

Appendix B.1: Survey/Interview Schedule

1/27/2019: Pre-Attachment to God Survey (PS1) administered

2/24/2019: Post-Attachment to God Survey (PS2) administered

3/17/2019: Focus Groups A and B interviewed

Appendix B.2: Pre-Attachment to God Survey (PS1)

Section A: Please Rate the degree to which you agree with each statement below.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
1. I have a warm relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. God seems impersonal to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. God's reactions to me seem to be inconsistent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I feel that God is generally responsive to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. God knows when I need support.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section B: Please answer the following demographic questions.

1. What is your current academic designation?
    a. Freshman
    b. Sophomore
    c. Junior
    d. Senior
    e. 5th year Senior+

2. What is your biological gender?
    a. Female
    b. Male

Appendix B.3: Post-Attachment to God Survey (PS2)

Section A: Please Rate the degree to which you agree with each statement below.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
1. I have a warm relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. God seems impersonal to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. God's reactions to me seem to be inconsistent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I feel that God is generally responsive to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. God knows when I need support.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section B: How was your experience?

1. On average, how often did you practice the specific prayer from each week?
    a. 0-1 times per week
    b. 2-4 times per week
    c. 5-7 times per week
    d. more than daily

2. How many weekly sessions did you attend?
    a. 5 sessions
    b. 4 sessions
    c. 3 sessions
    d. less than 3 sessions

3. What did you perceive as strengths of this intervention? (Where did you connect? Where were you challenged in a good way?) Why?

4. What did you perceive as weaknesses of this intervention (barriers, lost opportunities)? Why?

5. How would you most accurately describe any change in your relationship with God since the beginning of this experience?
    a. Worse
    b. Same
    c. Better
    d. Significantly better

Appendix B.4: Focus Group Facilitator Questions/Guide

Q1: Think back to the group discussions you had at the beginning of each session.
(Pause.)

How helpful were they (group discussions) in supporting you in the practice of prayer?
(Prior to discussion, have students indicate on a scale of 1-6 with 6 being most helpful.)

- **What was most helpful about them?**
- **What was not helpful or could have been better?**

(If participants want to change their original 1-6 assessment, they may.)

Q2: Think about the teaching segments.
(Pause.)

How helpful were they in supporting you in the practice of prayer?
(Prior to discussion, have students indicate on a scale of 1-6 with 6 being most helpful.)

- **What was most helpful about them?**
- *(if not covered)* **Was there a specific concept taught that you felt was particularly important?**
- **What was not helpful or could have been better?**
- *(if not covered)* **Was there a specific concept taught that seemed confusing, unnecessary, or created a barrier for you?**

(If participants want to change their original 1-6 assessment, they may.)

Q3: Think through the different prayer activities practiced during each session.
(Pause.)

How helpful were they in supporting you in the practice of prayer?
(Prior to discussion, have students indicate on a scale of 1-6 with 6 being most helpful.)

- **What was most helpful about them?**
- *(if not covered)* **Were there specific activities that were particularly helpful?**
- **What was not helpful or could have been better?**
- *(if not covered)* **Were there specific activities that were not helpful, could have been better, or even created a barrier for you?**

(If participants want to change their original 1-6 assessment, they may.)

Q4: Reflect on your experience practicing prayer throughout the week.
(pause)

How helpful was it for you to practice this discipline regularly?
(Prior to discussion, have students indicate on a scale of 1-6 with 6 being most helpful.)

- **Were there specific types of prayer that were particularly meaningful to you? Why?**
- **Were there specific types of prayer that you struggled with? If so, was this struggle good or not?**
- **What was helpful in supporting you in the practice of prayer (use of group messages, worksheets, specific assignments for the week?)**
- **What was not helpful or seemed unnecessary to helping you practice prayer? Was it not helpful because of the idea or poor implementation?**

(If participants want to change their original 1-6 assessment, they may.)

Q5: If you had one minute to share with a peer how this experience has impacted your relationship with God, what would you say?

Q6: *(Assistant moderator summarizes purpose of study and answers group has given.)*
Would anyone like to add anything?

Appendix C: *Practicing Prayer* Intervention Outline

Week 1: Praise (the character of God)	
Introduction/ PS1 *(typically small group)*	a) Introduce self and general purpose of intervention. b) Create safe environment to practice new things.
Direct instruction	a) God's nature is unchanging in all circumstances. b) God is both transcendent and immanent—why important?
Group activity	a) Alphabet prayer (calling out adjectives describing God in group—starting with adjectives beginning with letter "A"). b) Share favorite images of God in Scripture, stopping to praise God for who he is (small group). c) "God Cheer" (competition amongst small groups of creative and unrestrained praise).
Practicing Prayer	a) Set a goal for how often you will praise God each day. b) Share your one-word praise via social media with your small group each day.

Week 2: Praise (Thessalonians 5:16—thankfulness in all circumstances)	
Small Group Reflection	a) How was your experience with praise this week? b) Were you consistent in practice? Why/Why not? c) What supports were helpful/not? d) What could have been helpful?
Direct instruction	a) How thankfulness impacts our perspective. b) Identify what God has done for all—not just for individuals (grace, salvation, presence, Word…).
Group activity	a) Create thankfulness category list (people in my life, things in creation, historical events, things that are blue…) and pray out aloud specifics for 2-3 categories. b) Pray aloud Psalms of thanksgiving with passion
Practicing Prayer	a) Set a goal for how many times you will give thanks. b) Share what you are thankful for, via social media, with your small group. c) Post your thankfulness list somewhere to remind you to thank God for these things

Week 3: Intercession (God's will in the world)	
Small group reflection	a) How was your experience with thankfulness this week? b) Were you consistent in practice? Why/Why not? c) What supports were helpful/not? What could have been? d) How might we support each other moving forward?
Direct instruction	a) What is an intercessor? Why is intercession important? b) Christ is ultimate intercessor. Like him, we are called to intercede on behalf of others (by his power) c) We must abide/listen/come into agreement with God so we know what to pray. d) Knowing God's will through Scripture
Group activity	Intercede for groups of people in small groups (leaders, poor, families, the world…). Be sensitive to others who may have different life experiences and beliefs—focus on Kingdom basics that we all agree are God's heart for the world.
Practicing Prayer	a) Individually determine a topic of intercession for focus. b) In small group, determine a topic of intercession for focus. c) Intercede daily regarding the two topics of intercession. d) Share your group intercessory prayer throughout the week via social media.

Week 4: Intercession (Listening for individuals)	
Small Group Reflection	a) How was your experience with intercession this week? b) Were you consistent in practice? Why/Why not? c) What supports were helpful/not? What could have been? d) How might we support each other moving forward?
Direct instruction	a) What does it mean to listen to God? b) Ask questions before and while interceding (both to the HS and to person you are praying for)—LISTEN FIRST. c) Be bold/faithful but sensitive/humble (aware of variables including; power dynamics, person's spiritual maturity and comfort level, your relationship with the person, and your own experience/track record when listening to the HS). d) Err on the side of safety.
Group activity	a) Role-play various scenarios—what variables need to be considered? What questions might we ask? b) Blind prayer—praying for another without knowing who you are praying for (focus is on listening to God rather than perceived need). All prayers should encourage/edify.
Practicing Prayer	a) Start each morning asking God to show you someone you can pray for—listen for someone specific to come to mind. b) As you encounter others during the day, be sensitive to the HS nudging you to pray and act on it.

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